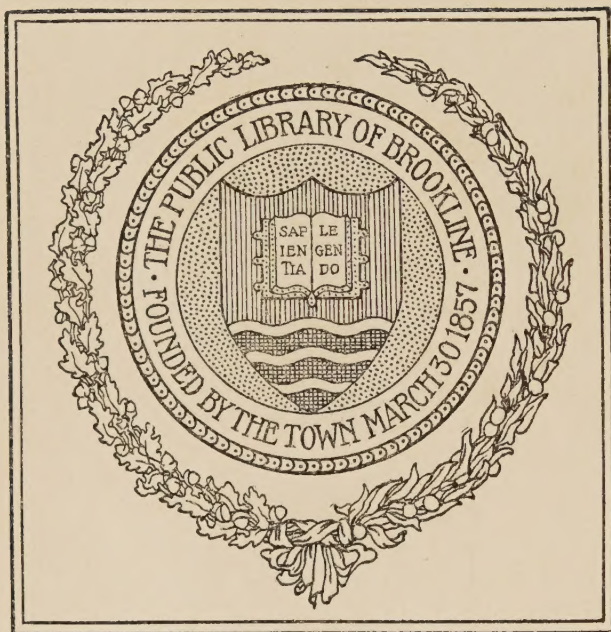






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THE FIRST YALE UNIT

VOLUME II



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F. TRUBEE DAVISON

# THE FIRST YALE UNIT

*A Story of Naval Aviation*

1916-1919

BY

RALPH D. PAINE

*Author of 'The Fighting Fleets,' etc.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME TWO

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# THE FIRST YALE UNIT

## CHAPTER XXVII

### GIRDING ON THEIR SWORDS

THAT voyage across the Atlantic through the War Zone seemed like a sporting adventure, either in a liner running alone or in the huddled convoy blundering slowly along without lights and ready to scatter hell-bent if a hidden submarine slipped a torpedo into some fat cargo-boat. Tourists stayed at home. There were no personally conducted parties under the chaperonage of the omniscient Mr. Cook. The ocean had become sinister and mysterious. It was dotted with imaginary periscopes and tragic with true tales of drowning ships and open boats.

Crowding on steam to run the gantlet of those last few hundred miles, decks aquiver to the kick of the screws, bluejackets standing by the guns, all hands nervous, and then the sight of the destroyer escort that came plunging out from Queenstown, or the yachts and seaplanes from Brest! How we all loved the Navy in such moments as these.

Gates and Lovett were the first members of the Unit to make the passage, sailing in the *St. Paul* on August 15, 1917, to report at Admiral Sims's London headquarters for further instructions. Vorys and Sturtevant followed a month later.

Close behind them was the group of seven, McIlwaine, Coombe, Landon, Smith, Walker, Beach, and Ingalls. From these various sources one may fit together some im-

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

pressions of the voyage as being more entertaining than when made in time of peace. Vorys said his good-byes ashore — pitched in just the right key — no swagger, but off to the front — and went down to the *St. Paul*, expecting to sail that same day. Friday, the 13th, however, was apparently too much of a jinx for the skipper to ignore, so he laid over until Saturday.

‘Al and I were disgusted,’ says John. ‘There is no anticlimax as bad as one of those Patti farewells, so we sneaked up town to a show in the evening, afraid we might see somebody we knew. After the good ship finally made up her mind to go to sea, Al and I stood watches on the bridge all the way over. This made the other passengers sleep a lot easier. Al got a terrific scare from the phosphorescent wake of a porpoise that made a bee-line for the ship’s quarter and then reassuringly turned and skipped over the bow wave.’

A similar episode disturbed the composure of ‘Hen’ Landon and his shipmates in the *Philadelphia*. He avows that ‘the trip over was a series of wild rumors and thrilling stories, so that the Baby Ace (Ingalls) and I, who were in the same cabin, slept in our clothes, armed with our trusty .45 Colts with which we swore to sink any sub that torpedoed our boat. The Kaiser must have got wind of it, for we arrived at Liverpool without mishap. Only once did I have any cause to be frightened. Ken Smith and I were taking the afternoon air and discussing the submarine question, so that we would know what to do if one did come up, when he suddenly grabbed my arm and pointed at the bow. Right there I nearly died in my tracks as a big porpoise jumped diagonally toward us, and I was all braced for the shock of the explosion. We both decided that it was kind of chilly on deck so went into the smoking room where the steward revived us.’

Kenneth Smith had that sentimental feeling when the



*Wm S. Sims.*

REAR ADMIRAL WILLIAM SOWDEN SIMS, U.S. NAVY  
Commander of the American Naval Forces operating in European  
waters during the Great War





## GIRDING ON THEIR SWORDS

ship moved away from the wharf in New York. It wasn't a girl or home, sweet home, or anything like that. What stirred him to the depths was an enormous sign on the building of the National Biscuit Company. With a sigh he observed, 'I wonder if any of us will ever see that sign again.' It was a moving speech.

MacLeish made the crossing in October and speaks of it in one of his letters:

The trip so far has been most remarkable. The weather has been perfect except for one day, when it was quite rough. We have been in the danger zone a day now, and we just got our convoy this afternoon. It was rather a pathetic sight to see the men and women pace the deck with that vacant, distant look in their eyes — so like a caged animal — and one could see that it had become a *physical* effort for them to search the horizon any longer.

I have tried hard not to, but all the way over I've been wondering whether I'll make a good fighting flier. I need several characteristics, or rather a complete change of attitude. I am fairly sure that as soon as I get busy the change will take place. It's curious but I wonder whether it will change *me* very much. I'm still more or less of a boy, and I have always doubted whether I'd ever grow up, but I guess my time has come. One thing I must develop, and that is the ability to lead and to organize. They say that any man may become a leader if given sufficient responsibility. I hope it's true.

Curtis Read, sailing in November, made brief notes in his diary, no more than suggestions of this scene and that. He expected to fill them in from memory. These broken bits, however, convey something of what he saw and felt:

*Nov. 24th.* Left for Liverpool on S.S. *New York* — camouflage — 3 6 in. guns, 2 3 in. noticeable. Interesting-looking crowd. Poor Mother; it certainly was hard for me to say good-bye. She is the most wonderful woman in the world. I really felt so sorry for her that I almost cried myself. Ferry-boats full of people waving au revoir.

*Nov. 27-30th.* Rough sea. Snowstorm. All the stewards on

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

board certainly have confidence in the old boat. Vaudeville Saturday night. Bishop Lloyd and Bishop Brent aboard. Miss Burke's fine talk about woman's part in the war. Bishop Brent read poems. Quartet, two passengers, two sailors. That evening Jeb Stewart in smoking room. Story at Tangiers. Story of Miss Burke's — Portsmouth women — 'price of butter won't come down.' Father Neptune and his Wavelets. Thanksgiving service.

*Dec. 2nd.* Two destroyers met us Sunday night, one pink and one blue camouflage. They certainly are faithful little boats. Blinking at night. Blimp, silver color, meets us. Lots of fishing boats. Land on starboard bow. Arrive early in the morning. Fool life preservers. Go to Consul's to get transportation to London. Interesting talk with British officers on way to Cambrais. 'Fed-up on it.' Bad business. Station crowded with troops. Arrive London at night — walk to Charing Cross Hotel. Ambulances full of wounded at station. Darkness of London. Quiet — great number of wounded men. Romance all gone. Horrible actuality only thing left. Blue stripe for wounded. No liquors served to them — better for convalescence. Have supper at 'Cheshire Cheese' with Mike Murray and Phil Page. Quaint old inn. Air raid gossip. Go back to hotel tired and cold.

*Dec. 3rd.* Got up early. Rotten bed, disagreeable maid. Broken bottle. Report to Naval Attaché, 30 Grosvenor Gardens. Streets full of wounded. Wonderful uniforms of the English. Same stern coldness, no hurry attitude. Almost despair. If America could only realize, etc. Evidently in a great hurry to get us over. Signs of something doing? Leave for Southampton — sad farewells at station. Train crowded with troops. Arrive Southampton. Dock scene — sadness — pretty effect of lights. Leave on packet-boats British naval officers — cheers. 'Mud in your eye.' Officer looking for steward. 'Carry on.'

There it all is, as the rest of the Yale Unit perceived it in first impressions — an England that was almost in despair, but stubbornly carried on — a London that was darkened and cold and tired, whose streets were filled with disabled men, but whose pavements echoed to the tramp of fresh battalions bound across the Channel — the sad farewells mingled with the defiant rattle of the drums. It was a long, long way to Tipperary. Another air raid

## GIRDING ON THEIR SWORDS

to-night? This was not the war as Broadway or Pennsylvania Avenue knew it.

It was a grim, self-absorbed London into which these young American aviators wandered with a certain sense of bewilderment. They were like bits of driftwood in the lash of a mighty tide. At home they had been given prominence — the Unit stood for something, on the campus and in the public mind. It was active in plans for the creation of a naval aviation force on a grand scale. What did all this amount to in London which had to deal with facts, not dreams?

In France and England there were no American air stations in active operation, no planes, almost no material. Kenneth Whiting's little force of officers and men, who had tarried in France because they didn't know where else to go, was doing its best to start something with borrowed quarters and equipment. The impressive programme of construction and offensive tactics — the Northern Bombing Group, Dunkirk, Killingholme, Paulliac, Eastleigh, and the Italian base—were all in the nebulous future.

For the members of the Unit the procedure was to report at 30 Grosvenor Gardens and there to be told to go to Paris where Lieutenant Commander Whiting would send them to the French training schools. Gates and Lovett, the vanguard, followed this route and landed in Tours, as the first assignment. Sturtevant and Vorys varied this by proceeding to Hourtin. These and other French stations were incidental to turning up at Moutchic sooner or later. The place was the scene of a more or less continuous Unit reunion.

It was when the dashing seven — count 'em — seven, McIlwaine, Ingalls, *et al.*, invaded Grosvenor Gardens *en route* to France that the memorable scandal occurred. For the moment it overshadowed the conduct of the War. And few events of that particular time seem to have etched

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

themselves so deeply, and so painfully, upon the minds of the unhappy malefactors. Admiral Sims was absent in Paris, fortunately for his own peace of mind. Bob Lovett, who was not among those present, went out of his way to hold them up to derision in such unbridled language as this:

The standing joke on the Unit, and one told at almost every mess, described the strange manner in which Coombe, McIlwaine, and a couple of others reported at London headquarters. It appears that they put on white gloves successfully, but their efforts to attach their swords were nothing to write home about. Captain MacDougall said that his staff spent the most hilarious ten minutes he ever remembers when these fine-looking and exceedingly natty officers strode into the room with their swords on hind part before, the sway-strap being buckled to the hilt, and the entire arrangement being hooked on in the very best land-lubber style. They created a lasting impression, and had it not been for the fact that Dave Ingalls wore the same uniform for thirteen months, the entire Unit would have gained an enviable reputation as the Beau Brummels of the air.

Here Lovett becomes guilty of personalities even more unpardonable, and no more than a sample should be permitted to pass the censor. He goes on to say:

I believe it was reported in Paris that from the proceeds of this crowd's contributions to Murray's dance hall in London, enough surplus remained to add another room to the building so that 'Chip' McIlwaine might have more space in which to shake himself and his partner.

McIlwaine gives his own version of the scene at 30 Grosvenor Gardens. He supplies certain details that serve for historical accuracy. He also constructs an alibi for himself.

How to report was the burning question — whether in khaki or blues, with or without swords. Walker and Coombe were all for formality. Ingalls, Smith, and I (having inside information)



## GIRDING ON THEIR SWORDS

were contrary-minded. The last three named purchased Sam Browne belts and swagger sticks and sauntered into H.Q., and somehow got away with it. The others donned their blues and swords, but here another problem arose — how to wear the swords. Again there was a division of opinion, and each man stuck to his own idea.

Consequently four timid naval aviators trailed in to report, looking like the remnants of the Serbian army. They didn't know whether to wear their hats because they had side arms; one had a sword knot and the others none, and, worst of all, one poor goof dropped his sword from the hook and trailed it along the floor as he entered the sanctum. The curtain drops on great confusion among the noble young aviators, sarcastic remarks by the C.O., and a disorderly retreat. Smith, Ingalls, and I enjoyed the show immensely, but the actors turned sore when we demanded an encore.

Walker, as one of the goats, pleads no extenuating circumstances and makes a candid confession, to wit:

Before we left for London we were informed that there was a book called the Navy Regulations, and in this service bible we found a paragraph which said in a general way that on reporting to any admiral or commanding officer in a foreign port, or embassy, it was quite the proper thing for a naval officer to wear his sword. On our first morning in London we decided that we must groom ourselves for the important occasion of reporting to Admiral Sims in the correct fashion and strictly according to naval etiquette.

Therefore four out of the seven of us girded on swords, the three others having been tipped off that only in peace time was this regulation observed and that in war such trifles were overlooked. Accordingly McIlwaine, Coombe, Landon, and myself reported to Naval Headquarters, some with our swords one way and some the other way, and were very impertinently told to look up the regulations and find out how an officer did wear his sword. This made us feel very badly as we had looked forward to this entrance as one of the supreme moments. However, it turned out to be far from that, and the four of us walked out with our tails between our legs.

Reginald Coombe presents a version slightly different,

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with certain facts omitted in the other confessions. It is important that nothing should be omitted, in order that the complete record may be preserved for posterity.

On the trip over we had met a Naval Reserve lieutenant who claimed to know the regulations by heart. He insisted that we should wear swords and white gloves on reporting to the Naval Attaché in London. Of our party of seven, four were in favor of this, the other three were not. Not to mention names, four of us reported in blue uniforms, yellow gloves as the nearest thing we could find to white, and swords. It was most unfortunate that none of us had ever seen a sword worn before. We walked in with them dangling, or back-end-to, or in other curious positions. Fortunately the Naval Attaché was not present and we were received by his aide, a somewhat younger and more lenient man, who dismissed us with instructions to report next day without swords and meantime to study the regulations. Not to be outdone by us, the other three members of our party blew into headquarters, some two hours later, decked out in forester green uniforms and Sam Browne belts. They were able to put it over our group because the officers who received them had never seen an aviation uniform before and asked all about it — was it comfortable and so on.

Such was the distressing introduction to darkest London! That these were young men of sterling merit is proved by the fact that they were able to live it down. For once the joke was on the peerless Wags! The seven remained in England a fortnight, buying clothes, visiting the impressive naval air station at Felixstowe, making acquaintances, and adjusting themselves to the extraordinary conditions of life in the shadow of war. They met Captain Hutch I. Cone, who commanded the U.S. Naval Aviation Force, and he displayed a lively interest in them. Confused and unfamiliar as they were, it was very useful to have him outline the plans for the growth of the service, even though these consisted largely of hope and expectation.





REAR ADMIRAL H. I. CONE  
Commander of naval aviation in Europe



## GIRDING ON THEIR SWORDS

On October 9th they left for Paris by way of Southampton. Crossing the Channel, so elaborately guarded and patrolled, with the wind bringing the distant rumble of artillery fire, was another novel experience. The small steamer was crowded, of course, British and French soldiers, Red Cross nurses, a few privileged civilians, and no accommodations to be found. Sam Walker felt chilled and indisposed — smoking too much or something like that — and was chased out of a warm nook in the boiler-room. After that he became friendly with a steward and curled up on a plate-warmer in the galley for the rest of the night.

He was to be the guide and handy man in a strange land, having served in the American Ambulance and therefore knowing French customs, etc. He would attend to the baggage, find the train, smooth the path. According to his comrades, he landed them in trouble with so many spluttering officials at Havre that Ingalls and 'Fat' Smith had to take matters in hand and utilize the three or four French words they knew between them.

They arrived in Paris at three o'clock in the morning, piling into four decrepit cabs. McIlwaine found himself alone in one of them with a mountain of bags. The driver had been celebrating a saint's day, or a victory at the front, and drove in a series of zigzags, banging into one curb, then into the other, or stopping his engines in the middle of the fairway. A naval officer is never dismayed. 'Chip' climbed to the box and navigated by means of intermittent star sights and bow and beam bearings, thus avoiding shipwreck until the Grand Hotel was sighted in the offing.

At this time the naval aviation headquarters in Paris consisted of two or three small rooms at 23 Rue de la Paix. Of Kenneth Whiting's hundred officers and men, some had been selected for training as pilots in the land school at Tours where they received the French brevet after passing

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

the test. This was followed by a course in flying-boats of the F.B.A. type at a French naval school at Hourtin, with the finishing instruction at Saint-Raphael, on the Riviera.

This was the programme which the party of seven men of the Unit expected to pursue. They learned that Lovett and Gates had passed through the stages of Tours and Hourtin, while Sturtevant and Vorys were still at the latter station. It was announced, however, that the army authorities had closed the Tours school to naval fliers, and the seven therefore were ordered to report to the only American naval aviation station in France, at Moutchic.

After an all-day trip from Paris, they reached Bordeaux and were met by Lovett, who was kicking up considerable dust in helping to organize the Moutchic school. They had looked forward to seeing Bob as a reliable informant and a friend in need. He had promised to give them the dope. This he did. All the good cheer he passed out could have been packed in a thimble. There was no sunny optimism in his system. Henry Landon describes it, with feeling.

Bob called us all into one room and we sat on the edge of our chairs and waited fairly pop-eyed. I never saw a more anxious bunch of fellows in my life. We were all keen to be up and doing, ready to hear the date of our first encounter with the Boche. Well, Bob sat down and with that serious expression of his proceeded to give us the worst dose of cold water imaginable. It certainly took the pep out of me, for the moment, and several others have since said the same thing. I think Bob dwelt too much with the gloomy side of things during that famous interview, even though things were moving very slowly. He made up for it later on and shoved us along as fast as possible.

In Bordeaux they commandeered a truck from the force of American Marines doing M.P. duty and, at eight miles an hour, crawled over the rocky roads to Moutchic, forty-five kilometers away. The station was no more than a few tents, two hangars, three F.B.A. machines, and four offi-

## GIRDING ON THEIR SWORDS

cers with seventy-five men. It was established as a school for instruction in actual war work for pilots freshly arrived from the United States.

There were no living quarters at the station for the valiant seven of the Yale Unit, so they tucked themselves in a little hotel at the seaside, several miles away, where the French landlord found bottles of good red wine to temper the cold, damp weather. On the next day four of them were sent to Hourtin to go up in the French flying-boats and get the hang of them. They tossed coins to see who should be elected. McIlwaine, Ingalls, Smith, and Landon won. Beach, Walker, and Ingalls sat around Moutchic and waited for opportunity to chuck them under the chin. In a week or so, Vorys and Sturtevant came over from Hourtin and gave them all the gossip. They were in high spirits, expecting orders to an area more active. Those little F.B.A. boats were tricky, said they, and the Clerget rotary motor had notions of its own. The larger D.D. machines, with a 200 h.p. Hispano motor, were used for patrol work along the coast which the French instruction officers performed intermittently. The course required only a few days, a few hops with dual control, and then two hours' solo work.

The life and surroundings of these French stations rather shocked and disillusioned the young American aviation officers. It was their first contact with the sordid realities of war among a people who were fagged and let down after three years of it. There was no more glamour, no misty heroics. It was brutal and filthy, incredibly fatiguing to body and soul. And the end was not yet in sight. This American aviation, no more than begun — it seemed so little and futile — a handful of men — no aeroplanes — it was like the merest speck on the gigantic fly-wheel.

These first impressions were therefore unhappy, veering to an extreme of bitter criticism. They had yet to compre-



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hend the realities of war. The climate was miserably drenched with rain. Tents were soggy, mud ankle-deep.

John Vorys could find nothing whatever to admire at Hourtin. He cursed it as

a temporary sort of place with Bessano hangars and log huts and quite collapsible buildings, around a lake which was only a puddle among the sand dunes. The latter were held in place by pine trees, wild boars, and wild Moroccans. We ate at the French officers' mess. Al and I learned some French there, but couldn't use it anywhere else. We lived in tents with Fearing, Cabot, and 'Doc' Stevens.

The system in use was for somebody to fix up an F.B.A. so it would fly a little and then for an instructor to take his pupils up one by one until the weather went bad or the machine busted or the instructor felt tired. It took us three weeks to fly the required four hours of instruction and solo. It rained most of the time and the crashes came pretty regularly, so we were blue and complained about France and the French way of doing things. After we finished this ham school we went back to Moutchic and made ourselves so unpleasant to Dichman, the C.O., that we were ordered to Saint-Raphael, the French Pensacola or finishing school. Thus were the crabbers rewarded.

At Hourtin we found John Vorys and Al Sturtevant [says 'Chip' McIlwaine]. They had taken the best tents, all the wash basins and most of the chairs. We made short shrift of them and dug in. These two were on splendid terms with Commandant Cenke, the C.O., and with the officer in charge of the mess. John introduced us uproariously and we soon felt at home at the table. The conversation was never on flying, which we were keen to enter into, but about boar hunting in the pine woods, the Commandant's new motor boat which had run up on the beach, about women, more women, and the inevitable *coup de pinard*. John's French was horrible, but he talked for all of us and made the whole mess roar.

There was very little system about the station, which was being built by Boche prisoners, the quietest, most law-abiding bunch of men I ever saw. Incidentally they had barracks and we had tents, and in winter at that.

Our instructors were enlisted men who were a fine lot. They

## GIRDING ON THEIR SWORDS

loved to show off and did so continually until one day Dave Ingalls made an F.B.A. do something they had never seen a beginner pull off before, and then they began to respect us.

Landon found it interesting, with new ways of doing things. It was a great life if you didn't weaken. This was not like training under the careful eye of Dave McCulloch.

Gathered on the little beach [says he], we watched the instructors bring out the machines. They were in a hurry to turn out their pupils and rough landings were the order of the day. I remember seeing a novice of a Frenchman who had made one bum landing and was about to try it a second time. He was going so slowly that I felt sure he would slip and drop, which he did, but he was so near the water that a tremendous splash was the only result. However, he hit on one wing and I was sure he had broken it. When he came ashore he was sworn at in rapid-fire French, and the chief pilot told the instructor to look over the plane. My surprise was great when the latter got into the machine and went off, making a few turns, and bringing it back to the beach. '*Ça va*,' says he. '*Bien! Monsieur Landon*,' says the chief pilot, and I went over and took up that same plane with not much confidence. Apparently the motto was, 'If the plane goes up and comes back safely, it is O.K., but if it doesn't, *c'est dommage*.'

'Ken' MacLeish, arriving a little later than these others, could find much to thrill and fascinate him during his first weeks in France. And he was able to put in words the charm which Paris revealed to him even in her days of mourning, with the lights and gaiety eclipsed. On his way to Moutchic he wrote to the folks at home:

PARIS, November 10, 1917

I fooled the U.S.N.R.F.C., as you see! They used to translate it 'Us Sailors Never Reach France, 'Cause!' But here I am, and my little bells are tinkling. And Paris! Oh, it's far better than even the wildest tales picture it. It's as much as your life is worth to go out to dinner here. There are literally *thousands* of girls who say they will show you around Paris, and it's a two-fisted

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

fight to shake them off. Rolley Riggs — the lieutenant commander — and I are here together, and I never laughed so hard in my life. We finally got out on the street, where one enjoys comparative safety. I ran into Junior Ames, Chicago, and three of my classmates from New Haven, who gave me advice. They said to look tough and say I was married, and I would be all right. But we weren't bothered again. This surely is Paris.

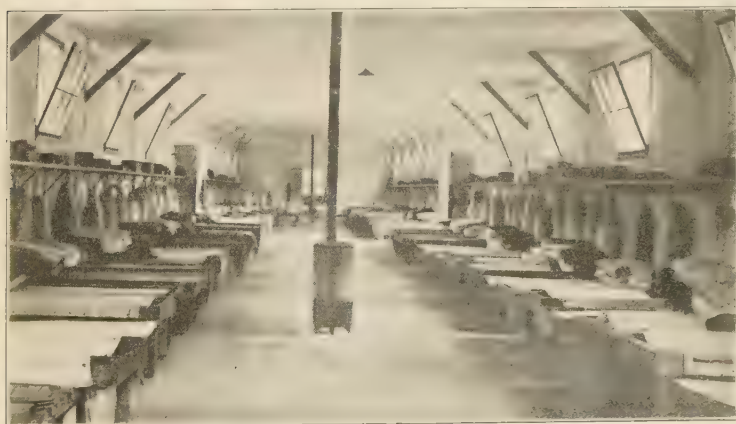
I saw Commander Whiting, to whom I am to report, and he said that I would be sent down to join the Huntington crowd. That is west of where Archie is, but I shall get into touch with him at once. . . . I met a couple of naval officers at the Embassy who were on the *Alcedo* when she was torpedoed. One was asleep in his bunk and knew nothing until he woke up on a raft — alone and badly hurt. The submarine came alongside and asked him what boat was sunk — he didn't even know his ship had been torpedoed.

One breathes an entirely new atmosphere over here. Poor France! She is a *nation at war*, and she is in over her head. Deeds that would astound the world five years ago are as common as rain. I wondered how some men who are not physically brave men ever lived through it. But now I understand. Brave deeds are commonplace. There is no fear of death. It is accepted when it comes as quite natural and quite all right. The glory of war is in the men themselves — not in their deeds. I have never seen such magnificent courage and such a wonderful spirit.

MOUTCHIC, FRANCE, *November 16*

Not until now have I been anywhere near settled, of course, and now that I am settled I fear I must move on. You see this is only a finishing school, and all I have to do is to learn a new type of control known as the 'Stick-control,' which is much simpler than the 'dep' which we have in America. It is very sensitive, hence it is used on all fast machines. It's just a stick and you push it in whatever direction you wish to go. It is used in conjunction with a foot rudder for direction, but the lateral and longitudinal controls are manipulated with the stick.

There are three possibilities for my future. I may be sent to Ireland to fly some tremendous boats, over one hundred feet wing span, which do patrol work and some bombing; or I may be sent to Tours as officer of a draft of enlisted men under instruction;



U.S.N. AVIATION TRAINING STATION AT MOUTCHIC, FRANCE





## GIRDING ON THEIR SWORDS

or I may be kept here in charge of the motors and work-shops. This will be the largest American school in France, but never mention the fact outside the family. You see I censor my own mail here, so I can say anything my conscience permits. But if my letters in the future come from any of the above stations in the order in which I gave them, I will simply say one, two, or three. I may be possibly sent to England instead of Ireland, and there is some hope of my being sent to Dunkirk, where I will be trained on land machines and will see actual fighting at the front. 'Di' is there now and he promises to pull for me.

This is a delightful spot in summer, I imagine, but just now it's as cold as all fired blue blazes. I live three miles from the station in a summer hotel, with no fireplaces — only a candle for light, and not a sign of a bathroom. A bathtub is unheard of in rural France and I go to Bordeaux weekly for my bath. What is worse, I'm here absolutely alone. I'm the only boarder, and no English is spoken. But don't let me get started on that tack or my letter will become *morbid*. Lord, but I'm lonely! You see the gang are all finished up, and they've gone. Bad luck, wasn't it?

The French people are very, very tired of the war. They will never, *never* quit, but they would give everything for peace. They haven't very much left now. You never see a man of military age, and able, not in uniform. The women run the street-cars, sawmills, factories, stores, and everything. But every one is blue as to the outcome. It is not unusual to hear of men in competent positions discussing being licked. America *must* wake up! She *must* send airplanes and pilots and send them fast. Germany fears the American air program, and she has started one of her own which will take the world off its feet next spring.

MOUTCHIC, November 23

... My career will evidently be void of all hairbreadth escapes, etc. I came here with the idea of flying like a fool, so that they would be *sure* to send me to the front, where I can have some fun, but after my first exhibition I was beached for a week, and told that I would probably be given a patrol on the Irish coast, as they didn't want any d——d fools at the front. Now I *am* discouraged. I thought the crazier you were the better chance you had of seeing some good active service, but my dope was evidently wrong. I did notice, however, that after the boss called me down, he asked how I did some of the tricks, so there may be



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

some hope yet, and he may be just kidding me. They asked me to try out a new machine the other day. It was a *lulu!* I never flew a rottener contraption in my life. It was a flying boat, with a rotary 130 h.p. motor in it. Well, it was fast enough, but when one turned to the left the gyroscopic action of the motor was to put the machine in a dive, and vice-versa on a right hand turn. Also it had a perfectly flat bottom and was very light, so that unless you landed tail-first you bounced some two or three times. When one bounces three times, the French call it a '*Capitaine de Frigate*.' The abovenamed gent wears three gold stripes on his sleeve, hence the simile!

MOUTCHIC, December 1

I have the dope on my future and I'm tickled to death. I am to go to England for a few weeks and learn to fly fast single-seater fighting machines. Then 'Di' and two others and I are to go to the station I've wanted to go to all the time. It is within sixty miles of the most important submarine base the Boche has. The base itself is absolutely impregnable. They have an anti-air-craft barrage that can't be penetrated, but all submarines going out have to cross over a shallow sand-bar. They can cross only at high tide — twice a day. We know exactly when that is, of course. There will be plenty of fighting, I guess, because the Boche realizes the importance of keeping our bombing machines away from the base. Gee! won't that be wonderful?

... I wish Bruce could have been with me yesterday. I went out to a field where they test out new machines. I saw all the latest types of fighting machines, and one monoplane that I simply haven't words to describe. A Spad and a Sopwith, both capable of about 130 miles an hour, were playing around up there when this monoplane came along. It went by them as though they were going backward. I never saw such speed. It must have been going about 160 or 170 miles an hour. And *climb!* Wow! Why, the pilot pulled it into a 'zoom,' which is a jump upward. The Spad zooms about 200 feet and then dies out, but this darn monoplane can *climb* at that angle. It was more than 45 degrees, and he held it all the way up. He climbed out of sight in four minutes.

They can't be used, because they can't be handled easily. They are very tricky in heavy air, and they can't land under about 110 miles an hour. So only about ten men in the world can

## GIRDING ON THEIR SWORDS

fly them. But they'll be perfected soon, I guess. The man who flew this machine is the best the French have. He and Guynemer had a bet, and he stuck to the latter's tail fifteen minutes. Guynemer couldn't shake him off, so you see he's fair enough — *n'est-ce pas?*

'Di' left a couple of nights ago for the front. He is the first one to go, but we three will be with him in a few weeks. He is too big to fit into a scout, so he is to fly bombing machines. You ought to see the machines we're to fly. They are wonders — they would fit right into a dining-room, easily! And they go 120 miles an hour. I'm crazy to get my hands on one. I visit the factory every day where they're being made, and I've got mine all picked out, and I am ready to name it, only I can't think of a suitable name. Have you any suggestions?

HOTEL CATHAM, PARIS, *December 3*

... We don't want a strengthening of the old religion; we must have a new. You can see it here on battlefields, struggling for expression. What makes cowards go over the top like martyrs? Surely not military discipline. That could drive them, but they wouldn't go bravely. What makes English officers rush out into the deadly fire of No Man's Land to rescue a German officer tangled in barbed wire and suffering agonies from his wounds? It is all new. I can't explain it. I can't formulate it, but it is there, and it is too noble and great to be split up into sects. It is above the old religion. There is no show, no pomp, no ceremony. The religion lies in the man. It is the outcome of this awful war.

PARIS, *December 9*

At last the order to shove off has come, after what seems an interminably long time in this awful hole. Three of us go to England, as I said before, to fly fast land machines. One of the boys will drop out and take command of a station, leaving two of us to go on from there. The outlook is very, very dull and gloomy. There are no bright spots. Even America's awakening is more or less of a good dream. You people over in the States simply cannot conceive of the horrors that these men go through. A fine young lieutenant played around with me when I was here last, only a month ago. To-day I saw him and didn't recognize him. The lines in his face had deepened, he had become very, very thin, and he was quiet and sad. He was at Bourlon Wood,

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

and he is the only survivor of his machine gun corps. You can't imagine the filth and chilling cold in the trenches. I can't — I haven't seen them — I have only heard. This lieutenant has the D.S.O and the Cross of Belgium. He said, 'You mustn't blame if we curse you and call you airmen *embuscades* because you live and eat well, but when we see you over our heads we all wish you damn good luck.'

The other night we went to a show and there were some Tommies there fresh from the trenches with the trench mud on their boots. The orchestra played Tipperary. It cuts me to the quick to see a girl cry, but to see men cry is *frightful!*

I am very lucky. I have a wonderful chance ahead of me, with everything to gain and not much to lose. My consolation and source of courage comes from the thought that I'm doing it all for you. It isn't a question of when we die but *how*. You people at home will have to make sacrifices before the nation wakes up. It's hard on you. I feel sometimes that you value my life more than I do. I don't think it's worth a darn, just now, but it *will* be, in some capacity, before I'm through over here. God bless you all. Don't pray that I shall never be in danger. Pray that I'll meet it as your son should.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE DAY'S WORK ON THE FRENCH COAST

DAVE INGALLS was very much 'fed' with Hourtin and spent about a month 'doing nothing but playing bridge and trying to keep warm in a small hotel' where he was kept awaiting further orders. On November 13th he was sent to Paris with Gates and Lovett, but found life no more zippy. He reported daily at aviation headquarters, was given light duty, and spent much of the time in 'eating, I think, and drinking in all the funny little restaurants in Paris.' On December 13th he was sent to the Gosport Flying School in England with 'Shorty' Smith and Kenneth MacLeish. Young Mr Ingalls had formed his own ideas about how things should be done and he improved his idle hours in Paris by sending the following survey to his father:

*Dec. 3rd, 1917*

Naval aviation here seems to be getting along very well now as we have several stations under way and some doing active work, but it seems to me they are not yet going at it in the right way. So far we of the Unit and a few older men are the only naval pilots trained in flying sent from the United States. The large number of men who have been sent over have had no previous training or practically none. Most of them are men who, on enlisting, were immediately shipped across regardless of their ability or adaptability for aviation. All the fliers here, except us few, have been trained here, first on land machines, then at several French water schools. These men, turned out as pilots ready for active service, have had very little time in the air and from my observation do not in any way seem to be the picked men that a country of our size and resources should send to the front.

The observers, for most of the water machines carry more than

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one man, have also gone through the French water observers' school. These men have had a very primary course in bombing and machine gun work. The mechanics, men picked from different positions of life, are not trained mechanics; some of them with perhaps a small knowledge of engines, have been sent through factories rapidly, listening to lectures mostly in French, a few translated, and they have had to pick up what they could in, at the most, three weeks. The rest are learning from these and from trying to take care of the machines at the station.

Now, to take the case of the pilots. Here, it is at the best a long and inefficient course because of the great scarcity of materials, oil, gas, training machines, etc. The pilots, except for a comparatively small number, will be used for patrolling and convoying. They do not need advanced training in different types of machines and with machine guns. They need merely plenty of flying in a large machine with practice in rough weather and rough landing. With everything at hand and plenty of materials these men could be quickly and much more easily and cheaply trained in the United States than here.

The observers for these large patrol machines in the same manner could be easily trained by a great deal of experience in machine gun work and especially bombing in the best large machines at home. As a patrolling machine does not necessarily have great speed, the observers would be able, on our machines, to have the same conditions in practice that they would have later when actively engaged. Thus the pilots and observers could have plenty of practical training.

Now from this number of pilots and observers, those who showed themselves superior could be taken out of the school and placed in another small school or else sent to an army school where the pilots could take a long and careful course on fast machines and could take also a course in the school of fire and in acrobatics. The observers could also take a course in bombing and machine gun work on the faster, lighter land machines.

The mechanics should be men preferably taken from the class of mechanics, thoroughly drilled on aeroplane motors and if necessary sent through a factory over here if said station does not use our American motor.

When these men arrived here, the pilots for patrol could take perhaps a few hops at the school here in their future machine and then would be ready and fit for work. The bombers and



## THE DAY'S WORK ON THE FRENCH COAST

mechanics would be ready and able to do their work immediately upon arriving.

The small number of pilots for the fast single seaters could take the short course at the army school here, and would soon be ready for duty. If necessary, the observers for the fighting planes could likewise attend for a short term the army school here.

Conditions here make a man's complete training in any one of the three divisions long, inefficient and practically impossible, while at home there is every facility to train any required number of men quickly, cheaply and efficiently.

Meanwhile, of these early arrivals in France, Vorys and Sturtevant were sojourning on the Riviera, chaperoned by 'Di' Gates. As the Pepys of the Unit, Vorys tells us what they did and how they didn't go to Monte Carlo and recoup themselves for the heavy losses they had suffered in playing the Colonel's perfidious Bromo horse to win.

Going down on the train from Paris, we were joined by one of the French student officers from Hourtin, named Louis Maravel, who was one of the best there. He got off at Marseilles, and asked us to visit him there, although he was going in a few days to San Raphael for training. We did not go, however.

We went to the Hotel de la Plage at San Raphael and found Gates and Lieutenant Corry there. Also Dr. Sinton, a Navy doctor who was in attendance on the American detachment. We lived at the hotel. There were ten or fifteen American enlisted men living at the station which was a mile from the hotel. We were enchanted by the beauty of the Riviera after our dismal experience at Hourtin, but our experience in flying was the same '*Pas de voler*,' etc. For the first ten days we were held back because there were too many French pilots and when our turn came, the dreaded mistral came up, which blew at times seventy miles an hour, and stopped flying for twelve days.

When the weather did clear up, we were put through very quickly. Maravel, the French officer we had met, came down and went through more quickly than we did. We got to be great friends. While taking one of his tests he got into a tail-spin through using his rudder, which was merely a dangerous ornament and not for use (on the F.B.A.'s), and was killed. This was

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

the first loss that had come near us and was very depressing. Al Sturtevant was flying at the time of his funeral, but I went. It was held in a cathedral built in the twelfth century, in Fréjus, an old Roman town a mile from San Raphael, and was very impressive. During the procession after the funeral, in which most of the officers from the station took part, a machine trailing a great French flag circled slowly overhead. I tried to express my feelings to Maravel's father and mother, but my French was not equal to the occasion.

We learned a great deal of French, living at the hotel with Frenchmen — not only the language, but the customs of the people. M. Le Franc, an officer at the station, who spoke English and whom we respected and admired greatly, lived openly with his mistress at the hotel. We had seen this sort of thing at Hourtin, but thought it was only the lower sort of officers who did it.

We took many interesting walks accompanied by our guide-books, through the towns near there, and I got a bicycle, so as to go further. Al insisted that he would see as much and get more exercise by walking. I used my bicycle to commute from the station to the hotel, and thus was able to get up later each morning than Al, who walked.

We graduated from the rotary motors and flew the F.B.A.'s with Hispano-Suiza motors. Finally we came to our tests. These were three in number, but we were allowed to combine them. There was a duration flight of two hours and a half and a duration flight of two hours, and an altitude test in which we were to stay above two thousand meters for one hour. We took these tests in two days. Altogether at San Raphael we averaged eight hours flying in five weeks. After our tests we flew the D.D. machines, and Al got to fly the Telliers, — a larger machine which was later adopted at the American stations.

After finishing our tests we received the French Navy brevet, and a large, fancy diploma with a naked lady on it. We wired to Paris that we had finished and as the Italian offensive was on and communication was slow, we figured we would not be ordered away for a week, so immediately went to Nice, hoping to make a trip to Monte Carlo and possibly the Italian border before we were ordered away. The trains were greatly disorganized, as they were running twenty-four to thirty troop trains a day to Italy, but we greatly enjoyed standing at the station

## THE DAY'S WORK ON THE FRENCH COAST

and watching and cheering the poilus and the Tommies, as they passed through.

We got to Nice and planned to go on to Monte Carlo the next day. We met some Americans and a Canadian and would have had a glorious time. They were going to give us a dance that evening, had we stayed. At noon we received telegraphic orders to proceed to Paris without delay, so we started packing at once, packed up at San Raphael and got to Paris Monday morning, November 25th. We were surprised at the ease with which we got around at the station. I attended to the baggage and Al looked after the tickets. We knew to whom to go; where to go; and what to say. It contrasted greatly with our other arrival in Paris.

On reporting we found we were to be sent to Felixstowe to fly the large Americas. We did not leave until the morning of the 28th and spent the two days with Bob Lovett, Gates, Sam Walker and Dave Ingalls, who all happened to be in Paris at this time. We went to the theatre to see a French comedy, and were able to make a little out of it. We saw 'Wally' Winter who has since been killed, in Paris, and heard news of a great many of the Huntington boys who had come over. We also met Lieut. Hull and Ensign Fallon, who were to be with us at Felixstowe!!!

We went down by train on the 28th and took the boat that night to Southampton, arriving in England about noon on Thanksgiving Day. After being in the South for so long, we noticed the cold a great deal. Thanksgiving dinner we had at the Savoy, where we stayed. Then we reported to Headquarters, and Captain MacDougall, to whom Al had letters of introduction, asked us to lunch the next day, the 30th of November. We met his wife and daughter, and they served cold turkey and mince and pumpkin pies, which made it a real Thanksgiving dinner, although a day late. We disgraced ourselves eating.

It was decreed that Freddie Beach and 'Chip' McIlwaine should remain a long while at Moutchic and assist in getting this American station well under way. It was what Atlee Edwards called the process of 'digging themselves in.' This duty engaged the two members of the Unit through the winter and they were not released for training

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

on land bombing machines in the Army school at Clermont-Ferrand until May 21, 1918. It was hard to feel reconciled to being held back from the front, but the job was well done in spite of heavy handicaps. McIlwaine was made Chief Pilot. Beach served his time as Engineer Officer and tells us how they handled things.

As more men arrived from the United States, they were set at work cutting trees, clearing and grading the land, and erecting more hangars, barracks and work-shops. We were able to find skilled labor among the enlisted force for almost anything we wanted to do; carpenters, masons, plasterers, machinists, etc. When I left in the spring, the station was practically complete in every detail.

We were held up for a long time in our flying due to the lack of spare parts both for planes and motors. New apparatus was slowly coming in, but nothing with which to repair our worn-out and broken down equipment. However, the machines that crashed were carefully salvaged and from these recovered parts we were able to build up new motors and, to a lesser extent, reconstruct the planes. We heard a great deal of talk of the impracticability of the French motors because of the great amount of hand fitting done to them which made it almost impossible to interchange parts. However, you never know what you can do until you have to. We took crank-shafts, pistons, cylinders, and crank-cases from different motors and turned out rebuilt ones that ran their allotted fifty hours as well as the new ones. These motors were Hispano-Suiza and Clerget.

McIlwaine and I were allowed a pretty free hand in our own departments and we followed quite closely the methods which had worked so successfully in our own training at Palm Beach and Huntington. Lieutenant Commander Bartlett, the new C.O. at Moutchic, knew how to handle us as efficiently as he did the old regulars and always managed to get the best and the most out of every one and yet maintain a good feeling throughout the entire command.

Late in May, 1918, I was sent to Clermont-Ferrand. MacLeish was in command of our party until near the end when he was taken sick and I had to finish up his job. He succeeded in arousing so much enthusiasm and keeping all hands so good-



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humored that we made fast progress and incidentally broke most of the school records. The work of the enlisted men whom we had brought along as observers was as good as if not better than that of the officers. MacLeish was also able, by means of his tact and industry, to maintain friendly relations with the school staff despite the fact that at times there was argument and some feeling over questions of leave, etc.

On July 12th we left Clermont for Paris. There we found everything in a mix-up due to the insistence of the Marine Corps in Washington that the land flying of the Navy should be done by them. We saw our dreams of a crack naval squadron that we had striven so hard to obtain and perfect sort of vanishing into thin air. As one result, we were again broken up and sent out wherever there was room.

McIlwaine found a good deal of satisfaction in the job at Moutchic and was able to say of it:

I consider that this station was by all odds the most important one abroad. Every seaplane flier had to pass through it in order to have the finishing touches added. It was presumed to have no part in training a pilot to fly, but the fact was that the average man had to have a preliminary period of instruction before he could be trusted not to smash up. This was made necessary by the hasty manner in which the pilots were turned out from many of the training stations at home.

No matter how up to date the schools at home were in machine gunnery, bomb dropping, navigation, etc., Moutchic was always two to six months ahead of them. Its main function was to keep abreast of all seaplane matters in England and France and adopt the very best and latest for our pilots.

The idea of the C.O. at Moutchic was to keep tabs on every pilot from the moment he arrived, so that when Paris wanted men for a certain type of work those most experienced in that line could be ordered away. Enlisted observers passed through this school also and at first were arbitrarily assigned to pilots, but this was changed until the two best suited temperamentally and in efficiency were paired together for the final tests. If a pilot and an observer did not keep up to the standard set they had to go through the course again.

I never saw officers and men work harder at any station, and



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when the Armistice came along, Moutchic was superior, in my opinion, to any Allied seaplane training station.

Curtis and Bartow Read remained at Moutchic with their two comrades, Beach and McIlwaine, until February 15, 1918. They did bombing practice and industriously helped to put the station and personnel in smoothly running order. Curtis found time to write chatty letters to his mother whom he affectionately called 'Bub.' He told her more about his friends, old and new, than about the day's work. This was characteristic of him. He valued friendships as some men cherish treasure and he inspired the same feeling in others. Those who served with him will tell you that these letters of his have the power to invoke richly freighted memories of his appealing presence.

*Sunday, Jan. 20, 1918*

DEAREST MOTHER:

Mr. McDonnell arrived the other day and acted as a regular Santa Claus; it certainly was wonderful to get all those nice letters and presents, and it really seemed very 'Christmas-y,' as you would say. Please thank everyone for their very nice letters. I have written you this before but want you to surely know about it, as I don't feel certain that all my letters get there. I am very glad indeed that our letters got there on *the* day; we couldn't have timed them better, could we? Your letters are perfectly fine, Bub, and you have absolutely no idea how welcome they are; nobody can write such nice letters as you do anyway.

Mark Walton (you remember Mrs. Walton at Norfolk) and Mr. Atwater, whom you also remember my talking about, arrived at the place where we are at, and you have no idea how fine it seems to see someone who has just arrived from the United States. Charlie Fuller and several others from Norfolk are due here any day now.

Yesterday I went over to a near-by station and someone asked me if I had ever known a Mrs. Emerson, who this man said had asked about me. Come to find out, Mr. and Mrs. Emerson were living in a château near-by, and Mr. Emerson is acting as architect for one of the largest naval base hospitals in France. I

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couldn't be there long enough to see them, but hope to later. I found out that their château is about forty kilos from where Bart and I are stationed.

Am now staying with Mr. De Haven at his house and it is perfectly fine. His two little girls are very, very nice, and make you feel very much at home. When I come home in the evenings, little Olga, who is Betty's age, meets me and escorts me up to my room and acts like a hostess of three times her age. Am getting so that I can understand French quite decently now and am improving in talking. After dinner we always have a game of chess and I usually get licked too.

The château is right near or on the ocean and it is beautiful in the evenings when there is a good sunset. It is quite warm now and the peasants say it is going to stay this way.

Received your letter with the Yale statistics, which I will fill out shortly. Bart and Mose<sup>1</sup> and Mike and I are going to leave here shortly; probably in two weeks, but as usual we can't say where. We are both very well indeed, and everything is going finely.

Lots of love to you, Bub, and to all the family.

FRANCE, *Jan. 25th, 1918*

DEAR MOTHER:

The last letter I wrote you was a sort of stupid one, as I was pretty busy and did not realize until very near time for the mail to leave that I had not written you that week. There are so many things going on all the time that when I come to think about them, they might interest you, which I take for granted, and I will try and tell you about some of them.

Mr. Atwater and Mark Walton arrived about a week ago and we are expecting six more from Norfolk very shortly. Old Bill Atwater is as funny and cheerful as ever and is lots of fun. I was officer of the day here then and was up meeting a train with a working party to get off some provisions and saw Old Bill Atwater leaning out of the window yelling 'Hello, Manager,' so you can imagine how glad and surprised I was to see him.

I have a nice room to myself at Mr. De Haven's house, which is much better than it was before where four of us were sleeping on cots in the same room. They certainly are a nice family and it is quite a privilege to live with them. Bart is still living here

<sup>1</sup> George Moseley.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

at camp and is probably going to stay there till we leave, which will be very shortly.

Last night there was a beautiful full moon and we all went out for a walk along the ocean. The house that Mr. De Haven has is right by the ocean, and is about five miles from the camp here. We leave in the morning about 5.40 and walk the five miles, so it is very good exercise and keeps you in good condition. This is about the only exercise we get.

Bart and I have everything we need, thanks to you, and to-day it was like the middle of summer here, so you felt as if you did not need anything on. Where we are now the peasants say that the winter is just about over and that there will be very little more cold weather. But I am going to leave here in a few days, and perhaps Bart, too, and it will be colder up there. The place where we are going is the station which I have been hoping to be sent to. Di Gates is the only one of our Unit there now. It will be the first really active aviation station which the United States has, so it is going to be very fine to be there. Dave Ingalls and Ken MacLeish will be there later. We are finishing our course here in aerial gunnery and bombing in a few days and are the first to leave from this course, as it was not complete before. Mike Murray, who is a very good mathematician and very clever at the theoretical calculation and practical calculations which dropping bombs involves, is being kept here as an instructor. So Bart and Mose and I will probably go to this other station with five enlisted pilots. Lieut. Chevalier is in command of the station, so if you ask Oliver James which one he is in command of, you will know where we are by the time this letter reaches you. George Moseley and several Lafayette Escadrille men are also here now and are going to the same station where we go. They are all very nice indeed and a fine lot. Ask Gus if he knows a man named Charles Bussett who is going with us and who was in the class below Gus at Harvard. He is fine. Also, a man named Haviland is going; he was in the Guynemer's squadron, and if you see a picture of the Lafayette group, you will see him in it. He has brought down two Boche already.

I was reading a book last night called 'How to Take Care of Yourself at the Front,' by an English lieutenant, and in it there was a chapter on things to be sure and 'rub in' to your family. The most important one was — Don't worry if you don't get letters, because if anything should happen to you, your family

## THE DAY'S WORK ON THE FRENCH COAST

will get a cablegram right away. So please consider this point, letters rubbed in, because from now on the mail will probably take a lot longer time to get to you and will also be blocked up more.

I am getting to the point now where every now and then I forget I am in a foreign country, till a peasant with a black tam o' shanter, a blue coat and pointed wooden shoes, comes by, and then I remember that I am the queer looking one, not he.

The moon now is *perfectly wonderful* and you can read a book in the middle of the night as well as in the middle of the day. Like the land of the midnight sun.

Am keeping a diary every day and write all kinds of fool little things in it that occur to me, as well as what I do every day, so that when I come home, I will have a lot of reminders of interesting conversations and events which I should probably otherwise forget.

Well, will stop now; will write more later on. Lots and lots of love to you all at home. To think that a small little thing like the moon is shining on both of us doesn't make it seem as if we were very far away, after all. I suppose now that there is a full moon, you are naughty enough to read all night long.

FRANCE, *Feb.* 12, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER:

Your letters have been very regular indeed and, needless to say, regularly appreciated. I am sorry to know that the lack of coal and terrible cold weather came at the same time. During the time you had your cold snap it was very very cold here too, but now in the middle of the day it is just like summer, and yesterday several men went in swimming. Things are going along as usual, we (Bart and I) are expecting to leave here this week sometime, and will be mighty glad to go. Being at this place is like being a thousand miles away from the war, and to live here you never would believe there was a war, except when you see 'Reformés' going by and occasionally an aeroplane patrol going by and occasionally an aeroplane patrol overhead.

I have changed observers now three times and have one now who is very good. Very bright, quick and no 'yellow' in him at all, despite the fact he is a Jew, but you would never guess it from looking at him or talking with him. It is remarkable how in a camp like this you find men who have been everything from

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jewellers to drug store clerks. So if a watch is broken, 'send for the jeweller,' etc. We have an abundance of plumbers who come in very handy too. Can't you see what a job in a drug store will look like to these men after their experience over here?

We have the job of censoring the men's mail and really some of the letters are killing. One fellow who had the romantic job filling in a sand pit, wrote home to his mother that he had been assigned to a machine which climbed ten thousand feet in nine minutes and it was his job to meet the big transports coming over the big ocean and usher them across. 'Bringing the boys safely over here was his job.' Talk about your Arabian Nights, won't his mother be pleased to know what 'Ferdie' is doing? Another one says, apropos of some exercises that the whole camp have every morning, 'Well, we American soldiers in France do Swedish exercises every morning to beat the Germans.' Quite an international event! Another one is going 'over the top' (of what I don't know) every day, and has captured several Germans already. Won't the Elmira 'Bugle' come out with an extra? And so it goes, great stories.

Rather a pathetic thing happened to-day. A French engineer, who has been working here with us, sent us a letter, saying his second son had just been killed and that he was going back to the front. He is some forty-seven or so, and has two wounds already. After being at the front as long as he has, any other work seems to make him restless, and he says he is happiest back there where he has no time to think.

Bart and I are both *very* well and happy. I weighed to-day and find I weigh 154 pounds, more than I ever have before. Lots of love to you. We both think of you all the time.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### 'KEN' SMITH IS LOST AT SEA

THE inscrutable wisdom of official orders had snatched various members of the Unit from Moutchic and Hourtin to go spinning away to other stations. It was like the little round ball that traverses the roulette wheel, and the devil only knows where it will drop next. Four of these aviators managed to hang together for some time and to find life fairly zestful in the patrols of the French coast. These were Walker, Smith, Landon, and Coombe. The Wag Crew almost intact! *Voila!* They were told to go to Le Croisic and departed thence on October 27, 1917. This was a French coastwise air station which was to be taken over by the American forces and used to help drive the German submarines farther away from the coast and to protect the immense amount of transport traffic in and out of Saint-Nazaire.

The French had been doing what they could in this direction, but it was with scanty equipment and a depleted personnel. Escorting the overseas troop and supply convoys was the spectacular part of the job. Fully as arduous and essential was it to safeguard the coastwise convoys passing along the French coast in mighty processions of commerce between the Mediterranean, Spanish, and French ports and the English Channel and beyond. This was the vital duty of the converted yachts under Rear Admiral Wilson's command that won the name of the Suicide Fleet.

Like the Yankee airmen the yachts had to learn this game, finding their courses in darkness and thick weather, herding a nervous, clumsy flock of twenty or thirty mer-

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chant ships, joyously hoping and yearning for a shot at a submarine, winning their way to port where they shoved more coal aboard and made ready for sea again. In spirit this service was akin to naval aviation. These were no regular Navy crews, but Reserves, Naval Militia, and recruits with little training. The skipper, as a rule, was the only seasoned naval officer, and the serious young men who paced the bridge with him were brokers, lawyers, merchants, chief clerks, learning to serve their country between spells of seasickness.

Among the enlisted men there might be a few real blue-jackets and a veteran chief petty officer or two, but the average ran to stalwart youths from the colleges. They had escaped from the tame routine of the Atlantic coast patrol and were keen to follow the ball and hit the line hard.

The son of the man who owned the yacht might be peeling spuds or washing down decks, his dearest ambition to win a rating as a boatswain's mate, or you were likely to chat with a modest, respectful able seaman who could buy a boat or two without crippling his bank account. It was bluewater democracy, all hands together, eager to make an efficient ship as soon as possible.

To Le Croisic, then, proceeded the Yale Unit quartet, all set for action, although they had hazy ideas of what it was to be. They took a detail of fourteen enlisted men with them and spent the night en route at Bordeaux. There they caught glimpses of two distinguished personages. One of these was Lieutenant Artemus L. Gates who had just come up from Saint-Raphael on waiting orders. The other was General John J. Pershing who was dining at the Chapon Fin Restaurant with several French staff officers. 'He looked rather curiously at our green uniforms with naval shoulder straps and Sam Browne belts,' says Coombe, 'and I don't know whether he relished the sight or not.'



LANDON'S PLANE ON THE BEACH OF CROIX-DE-VIE



SMITH, LANDON, WALKER, AND COOMBE AT LE CROISIC



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They left Bordeaux the next morning, in time for lunch at Saint-Nazaire, which interested them as swarming with American soldiers and stevedores and congested with shipping. Fifteen miles beyond was Le Croisic where they arrived after dark. It was a small fishing village of the Loire, ancient and quite picturesque. A visit had inspired Browning to write a poem about it, 'The Two Poets of Croisic.'

The air station was situated on a tiny island separated from the main street of the village by a moat or canal. A rugged indentation of the coast formed a little sheltered harbor which was favorable for seaplanes at high water. An eighteen-foot rise and fall of tide, however, made it necessary to lower machines by means of a crane when the bay was mostly mud and sand.

With the aid of German prisoners, the French had built barracks, machine and carpenter shops, a bomb magazine, and several hangars. At this time they were using the station as an 'alerte' post, with two planes kept in readiness to respond to submarine alarms within a distance of fifty miles.

The first American detachment of seventy-five men had arrived three weeks earlier than this and were quartered in an old school building in the village. The temporary C.O. was Ensign Bush, who had been a chief petty officer of ten years' service. In the opinion of the Yale fliers he was 'a regular guy' and one hundred per cent. A hard-shell with a wise head and a soft heart! They learned to like and respect him immensely. He had comfortably established himself in a French dwelling and invited these others to stay with him.

A week later, Lieutenant Callan arrived with a hundred more enlisted men just landed from a transport at Saint-Nazaire. With this increased force, things began to hum. They set up additional hangars and other buildings for



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their own use. Four Tellier flying-boats arrived and were assembled. They were big, powerful looking machines with 200 h.p. Hispano motors, a queer, long hull tapering upward toward the tail, with two steps on the bottom. The wing spread was fifty feet. The Yale men were crazy to try them out, but Lieutenant Callan made them wait until a man from the factory came to test them.

On November 7th, Lieutenant W. C. Corry reported to take over the command of the station. He was an Annapolis graduate, 1910, and had been through the original course of training at Pensacola with Eddie McDonnell. He had crossed to France with Kenneth Whiting's pioneer party in June and, since, had been through the routine of the several training schools. He was agreeable, experienced, and efficient. No time was lost in organizing the officer personnel. Which Yale man was senior to another was a problem that couldn't be solved, so Lieutenant Corry assigned them according to age, Landon as Chief Pilot, 'Ken' Smith as Engineer Officer, Sam Walker as Intelligence Officer, and 'Reg' Coombe as Ordnance Officer. The enlisted crew was divided among these four departments and each assigned its quota of men. It was up to the officers to handle their own divisions and get results. The staff was ready to function, with Ensign Bush as Executive and Paymaster Becquette in the supply office.

On November 11th the station was inspected by Vice-Admiral Jolivet, of the French Navy, and Commandant Vaschalde, commanding the *Patrouilles Aériennes de la Loire*. The latter officer was in charge of all aerial operations in the sector which extended from Quiberon on the north to Île d'Yeu on the south, a distance of seventy-five miles. Although the station at Le Croisic was manned by an American crew under its own officers, the operations were in general control of Commandant Vaschalde. This was the procedure followed by other American naval units.

## KEN SMITH IS LOST AT SEA

They felt obliged to pay deference to the sensitive feelings of the French Ministry of Marine.

It was planned to organize an American patrol as soon as possible. For practice, meanwhile, there were three French seaplanes. The Yale men flew as often as they could, just to be in the air and enjoying it. The French pilots warned them that they were imprudent. Says Henry Landon, 'I could not help trying to show them that we knew a thing or two about the flying game. My chief delight was to taxi in on the step to one of our buoys. Once I was met by the younger French pilot who said (translating him literally), "My friend, you are a reckless fellow. Some day you break your face." He was wrong, however, and as Ken Smith will tell you, I was a very prudent flier.'

Lieutenant Commander Griffin came down from Paris on November 13th, with two Packards and three or four Ford cars for station use. He had flown Tellier boats and remained at Le Croisic long enough to take each of the flight officers up for a trial hop and show them the gadgets. They found the machines easy to fly and well suited for patrol work.

This was the finishing touch before beginning 'alerte' duty in the area from Quiberon to Île d'Yeu. On November 17th, the first American patrol to operate in European waters left the station. It consisted of two Tellier machines piloted by Landon and Coombe. It was only a two-hour flight for the purpose of getting acquainted with the sector. Ordnance equipment had not arrived so neither plane carried bombs. Three days later, a consignment of bombs reached the station, followed by Commandant Destrau, from the French station at Lorient, whose visit was for the purpose of installing the bombing equipment and teaching the American officers how to use it. Eight months after the United States had entered the war, it was unable to provide material for aerial bombing.

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Then came that sensational morning of November 22d. The American outfit at Le Croisic received their first 'alerte,' the emergency signal to stand by. From the radio shack came the message, 'Allo 47° 18' north, 3° 52' west.' An enemy submarine had been sighted near the coast. One machine was ready for patrol, Tellier boat 87, with the bombing device attached. As rapidly as possible she was pushed out of the hangar and lowered from the crane on the quay. The C.O. was in Paris, leaving Ensign Bush in charge. As Chief Pilot, however, the flying arrangements fell to Henry Landon. He decided to let Kenneth Smith have the honor of the first submarine hunt, as it was his machine that was ready to go.

The Tellier flew away at noon, with Machinist Wilkinson and Observer Brady as the crew. No equipment was carried in the event of a mishap. They were too excited and too new at the game to realize that the one plane should not have been sent out alone. The afternoon passed and faded into darkness soon after four o'clock. Nothing had been seen or heard of 'Ken' Smith and his venturesome patrol. The Tellier carried gasoline for a flight of no more than four hours.

Landon, Coombe, and Walker were three anxious and agitated young aviators. In the dusk another plane was ordered into the water to go in search, but Ensign Bush called it back. The two French pilots had talked him out of the idea as foolish, with night coming on. Landon fairly exploded in helpless anger and chagrin. They lighted flares on the chance of guiding the lost plane in from sea. An alarm was sent to the headquarters at Saint-Nazaire. The long night dragged past with no tidings. There was nothing to do but make plans for an early flight in the morning. Before daylight three machines were ready to go scouting over the sea.

Coombe took one and flew north. Walker and Landon,

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in the others, searched the sector to the southward. They swooped down to scrutinize every bit of floating débris, but found no clue in the miles and miles of wintry and melancholy ocean. After three hours and a half they winged it back to the station for more fuel. There they found, to their amazing joy, that a pigeon had come homing in with a message from Kenneth Smith. It had been released late in the afternoon of the day before, as the notation showed. In fog and darkness, the bird must have made the land and stayed somewhere else overnight before finding its way to Le Croisic.

The message brought the news that the patrol machine had been forced down by motor trouble when about twenty miles west of Île d'Yeu which was twenty-five miles south of the air station. An estimate of position was included, with the disturbing statement that a heavy sea was running and help was needed in a hurry. Henry Landon and his comrades tried to figure the probable drift during the night, with a strong northeast wind that would have blown the disabled derelict flying-boat well out into the Bay of Biscay. The prospect of finding the castaways afloat and alive was none too good.

However, this was infinitely better than no tidings at all. With no delay the three rescuing planes rushed out again, Coombe taking Gillespie, an enlisted pilot, with him and heading toward the area indicated in the message. Walker and Landon ranged over other parts of the sector, surmising that in twenty hours or so the wrecked plane might have been washed far from its first position. The search was futile. Coombe flew so long and so far that he was unable to return to Le Croisic that night, so he steered for shore in the hope of making a landing at La Pallice, about seventy-five miles to the southward, where there was a French air station.

Gillespie was still flying in company with him. They lost

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their way in the dark and could do nothing else than trust to luck and beach the machines as best they could. They descended to the water somewhere on the French coast and had the deuce of a job getting through the surf. The three men in each machine had to fight to keep them headed shoreward, as they insisted on slewing sidewise and so threatening to smash the wings. This accomplished without disaster, they found themselves forlorn and alone. No village near by, not even the twinkle of one friendly light in a window. They felt as lost as if they had stranded on a desert island.

Like an act of Providence, an ancient fisherman came puttering past with a donkey-cart. It was gathered from him that the little town of Tarance was six or seven kilometers away. Leaving the party in charge of Gillespie, 'Reg' Coombe trudged along with the fisherman to send a telegram. It turned out to be an absurd adventure. None of the villagers of Tarance had ever seen an American uniform. They regarded it with lively suspicion and refused to believe that these visitors had dropped from the skies for any honest purpose.

Strenuous argument and the beguiling manner of young Mr. Coombe finally convinced the alarmed villagers that it would be unfair to lock him up. His credentials were accepted, with vigilant scrutiny, and he was permitted to send a telegram to Le Croisic. It was really wasted effort, for the message reached the station some twenty-four hours later, speedy transmission for the French service in war-time.

The fisherman was a kindly soul who took the two Americans to his own house. His wife made an affectionate fuss over them, protesting that they must dry their clothes by the fire. The family gathered about, very wide-eyed and curious and voluble, while these sensational guests were regaled with a meal of garlic-flavored stew and red



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wine. Madame made up a package of meat and bread for the unfortunates left with the stranded flying-machines. She said she had never seen so much money in her life as the handful of francs which Coombe showered upon her.

Back they toiled to their shipmates. All hands were compelled to be on duty most of the night, or until high tide at four o'clock in the morning, when the machines were left high and dry on the beach. It was wet, cold work, splashing in the water, shoving and hauling, and in spite of their exertions the pontoons were twisted and broken, wires loosened, and the whole structures badly strained. It was doubtful whether these battered boats could be made to fly.

However, this was no time to be finicky. The party snatched a couple of hours' sleep on the beach, and waited until the tide served for shoving off. They managed to get in the air and laid a course for La Pallice, only fifteen miles distant. There they were grievously disappointed to learn that no word had been heard from Kenneth Smith and his lost plane. There was nothing for them to do but leave their machines at the French air station and take the electric tram to La Rochelle where they turned in at the Hotel La France for a few hours' sleep.

At Le Croisic, things were in a dismal plight by now. 'Ken' Smith had not been heard of for almost two days. 'Reg' Coombe and Gillespie had also vanished without a trace. The C.O. had returned from Paris and was very much upset. He forbade any more machines to fly in quest of the missing aviators. He had lost enough of them. All destroyers and patrol boats had been notified to assist in the hunt. Nothing more could be done.

Late in the afternoon of the third day a telephone message from La Pallice conveyed the great news that a French destroyer had picked up Ensign Kenneth Smith, Wilkinson, his mechanic, and Brady, the observer, from a

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demolished seaplane which had sunk fifteen minutes later. The station celebrated *en masse*. It was a large, memorable evening with a few headaches in the morning. Libations were justified.

Meanwhile, poor Reginald Coombe had heard not a word of this cause for jubilation. After turning out of the Hotel La France, he went back to La Pallice where he picked up a report that a French destroyer had found a floating seaplane off Bordeaux. It failed to mention whether or not the crew had been saved, so Coombe wandered to La Rochelle again in an uneasy, disconsolate state of mind. He was sitting in a corner of the dining-room alone when a waiter informed him that another American officer, wearing a similar uniform, desired to see him in the hall. Rather puzzled, he went out.

Three rousing cheers! There stood 'Ken' Smith in his bedraggled flying-clothes. With him were Brady and Wilkinson. They were a sorry sight, faces drawn with exhaustion, eyes brighter than normal. For fifty-two hours they had been adrift with almost no food, no water excepting what they could drain from the radiators, and under the most punishing strain. They showed it. 'Ken' managed to smile and tell, in a few words, what had happened. Coombe found rooms for them in the hotel and made them as comfortable as possible. The next day they made the journey to Le Croisic by train, Coombe staying behind to look after his own machines.

The story of the lost seaplane is told by Kenneth Smith himself. What he wrote needs no expansion or adornment to portray what these three castaways endured and how pluckily they fought for survival.

When an 'Allo' came at 11.30 A.M. on Wednesday, November 22d, 1917, stating that a submarine was in our sector, we were all very much excited. I was anxious to make the trip, but as I was not the senior pilot I had to refrain from expressing my feelings.

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When I was informed by Chief Pilot Landon that I was to be sent, I was enthusiastic. After selecting my observer, Frank Brady, and mechanic, Wilkinson, I got ready as soon as possible. While the plane was being armed with bombs and being lowered into the water, I got all the available information about the submarine which was reported torpedoing a schooner.

I remember noticing the peculiar expressions and whispered remarks of the men as we passed them on our way to the plane. They were very skeptical about our going out with live bombs, as this was the first war flight and every one was inexperienced in their construction. Our only instructions on these bombs had been from a French officer who could not speak English very fluently.

When we got into our plane we felt very puffed up, as we were the first Americans (either Army or Navy) wholly under the American Government to make an independent war flight on our own resources.

The day was a miserable one, very foggy in addition to a high sea outside the breakwater. We left the water at noon and headed in a southwesterly direction out to sea. It was not long before we lost sight of land and became enveloped in the fog. As we climbed, the fog got thicker and thicker. My observer turned and looked at me in a questioning way. I let him know that as preparations had been made for a long flight, we were going on. He again set to work keeping a bright lookout.

We had an improvised map which was not in a wind-proof case, as it should have been. This omission caused me considerable difficulty in navigating, as neither my mechanic nor observer had had any experience in flying by map or dead reckoning. Furthermore, as the air was very bumpy, it was only by snatching a glimpse now and then between bumps that I was able to figure where we were going.

As we were running before the wind, it took us about thirty minutes to reach Île d'Yeu, which was in the vicinity where the submarine was operating. This being the first time over the lower end of the sector, it took me several minutes to recognize the island. We circled the island to see if the submarine was close to shore. While doing this, I was figuring out the course to steer to pick up the sailing ship which had been fired at.

On completing the tour around the island, I headed about due west. After about twenty minutes flying, I was relieved by

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sighting the ship to find that I had figured the course correctly.

We circled and recircled the ship, gradually increasing our radius until it was just visible. We then headed due west. After flying for an hour without being able to see anything, I decided to turn back. We had been flying for twenty minutes when a queer feeling as if something was about to happen came over me. I looked down at the ocean to see if the waves were high. It was then that I gave a little shudder on seeing that the waves in addition to being very high had white caps on them. I also noticed that the fog was beginning to lift with the freshening of the wind. Instead of heading for home, I made for the nearest land, running before the wind.

These thoughts had no sooner passed than the motor started to sputter and miss. I was then very close to the water and was unable to turn into the wind because of our low altitude. Not wishing to come down, I kept going, trying not to lose height. The motor finally stopped. I had failed to shut off the switch, as it did not seem necessary. Just as I was about to land, the motor came on wide open, due to reasons which I did not know at the time. This power threw the plane ahead and made us strike the water at an unexpectedly swift rate of speed. As a result of this we were bounced off the crest of the wave into the air. We went so high that I had time to shut off the power and make a stalled landing. This was very fortunate for us under the conditions.

We looked wonderingly at each other without saying a word. Wilkinson, the mechanic, was the first to speak. He asked why I had landed. I could hardly tell him that it was on account of the motor, as I was so seasick. Brady, the observer, who was taken ill the same time as I, was as white as a sheet. Wilkinson soon after was in the same predicament. He, however, got up and looked at the motor, but could not find anything wrong with it. We then decided to crank it. To our surprise she started very easily and ran smoothly. In the meantime we had let go our bombs so as to lighten the plane. We decided to try and get off. Every time we opened the motor wide, she skipped, popped, and almost stopped. We did this several times before we decided that it would be useless to go on without fixing the trouble. We then shut off the motor and got up and shook the water off of ourselves as best we could.

The boat, during these attempts, had shipped considerable



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water over the bow. As soon as we stopped attempting to get off, we were all taken seasick again. Wilkinson worked trying to locate the trouble. He did not find that the trouble was in the gasoline tanks until it was too dark to do anything.

Before dark we let go one of our pigeons, giving as accurately as we could our position and time of landing on the water, also asking that assistance be sent. We then all sat down in our seats and waited hoping that something would come along and pick us up.

The fog lifted early in the evening and towards midnight the moon came out. It was a glorious night and I could not help thinking that if we could only get the gasoline system fixed we would stand a very good chance of getting off and reaching land. None of us slept very much, but I must have slept sometime, for I awoke with a start, realizing that the wind was coming up and that the sea was getting rougher. During the night we took regular watches; one bailed while the other two slept. It was reassuring to know that Hen Landon, Reg Coombe and Sam Walker, who were at the station, would do everything in their power to rescue us if they could only locate us. This thought kept up our hopes which were none too bright as the sea began to roughen.

On Friday morning we let go our last pigeon telling that we had seen flashes during the night from a lighthouse on our star-board bow. At this time we did not hold out much hope, as we were very skeptical about our young and inexperienced pigeons. We realized, however, that we were at war and made up our minds to pay the price if it was our turn to do so. We were very anxious that those on shore should know this, so at the end of our message we wrote, 'Please tell friends that we died game to the end.'

As soon as we dispatched the pigeon, we started to work on the motor again. We cleaned the magneto, shifted the gasoline from one tank to the other, and put in one new set of spark plugs. We then bailed the water out of the boat and made her as light as we could under the conditions. Finally at 11.30 A.M., Wilkinson got the motor started. Just after starting the motor, we saw an aeroplane and dirigible to the north of us. Our hopes and expectations were soon lost, as they turned and headed north. We then started to taxi toward Île d'Yeu, but did not make much headway on account of the sea. Finally we decided that our only



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chance was in trying to get the machine off the water. This we attempted, but only succeeded in nearly demolishing our plane. We broke the left wing, opened up the seams in the boat and dislodged the motor. In other words, we put ourselves in a worse predicament than we were before. At the time I could not help marveling at the spirit of Wilkinson and Brady, for it was just as if their only hope was snatched away from them.

Toward evening we did not feel any too cheerful, as we doubted if we could ride the night out. We took our regular watches Friday. This time only one could sleep, as one had to stay out on the right wing to keep the plane balanced while another bailed. The first real evidence of strain began to be felt by all of us. It was very trying to have to listen to your plane moan and groan as each wave struck it.

All day long gulls had kept swooping down around us. This was not very pleasant, as the thought of their care-free attitude annoyed us. Up to this time none of us had had any water to drink or anything to eat. My throat felt as if I had had my tonsils removed. Every time I swallowed, it pained. Our thirst was aggravated by the salt residue which kept forming on our faces and lips from the sea spray.

During the night the thought came to me that I ought to pray. As I had not prayed for over a month, I could not make myself do this. In fact, it seemed silly to acknowledge oneself as a hypocrite. A few weird thoughts of what I had read in books and magazines of people singing hymns and repeating passages in the Bible also ran through my mind. Somehow these thoughts put me in a peculiar frame of mind. I made up my mind that no matter what came I was not going to sing or repeat verses or even try to die with a halo on my head.

During the night I kept thinking of all the wonderful times I had had. This kept me in a calm state of mind and helped to pass away the time. The long, uncomfortable night was filled with many anxious moments. Saturday morning finally came. As the sun rose, our strength seemed to give way.

Our left wing kept crumpling. Each time we rolled, the metal struts would pound the boat hull. This was getting very serious, as a hole was being pierced in the boat. At eleven o'clock we cast the left wing adrift. Immediately the right wing serving as a sea anchor swung us broadside to the swell. Matters were at this time getting rapidly too serious for our weakened condition.

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Being broadside to the sea caused us to ship a lot of water. We worked the rest of the day trying to remove the engine and right wing. This we could not do in our weakened state.

Just as it was getting dark, Wilkinson sighted to the south of us a moving object. At first we could not make out whether it was a buoy or a spar in the water. As it came nearer, we thought it was the periscope of a submarine. This, however, had no effect on us, for it meant that they would either pick us up or blow us to pieces. We at that time felt as if either one of the two was as good as the other, if we could only escape from our present predicament. You can imagine our joy when we found that it was a French torpedo boat which had been searching for us. Fifteen minutes after they took us aboard we saw our aeroplane sink.

After having several hot drinks and a big meal, we went to sleep and did not wake up until midnight when we were landed at La Pallice.

Kenneth Smith sent to Colonel Thompson the following documents to complete the story:

### *Copy of Wilkinson's Log (the seaplane's mechanic)*

On Friday night we stood watches, one man bailing water out of the boat, while the other man was supposed to sleep, but this was impossible on account of our wet clothes and water coming over the boat at all times. Upon landing Thursday night the magnetos and carburetor were filled with salt water. When I tried to start the motor Friday morning it was impossible until I had dried out magneto leads and placed in new spark plugs for one magneto. When we finally succeeded in starting motor we taxied for about one half hour and the other magneto dried out and commenced to fire. We discovered that we were not making any headway, so Mr. Smith thought he would try to get off water, but the water was so rough that in attempting to get off we busted the left wing, also the three seats and opened some seams. We immediately stopped motor and commenced to get ready to cast off left wing should it become necessary, but we desired to hold on to the wing as long as possible because of our lateral balance and we realized that as soon as our left wing was gone it was only a matter of minutes until we sank. We held on to the left wing until 11.30 A.M. Saturday, when we started to

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cast it off. This done, we prepared to cast off the right wing and engine. I was working on top of the engine when I sighted what we thought must be a German submarine, but we were all happy, at that, as we were about all in, having had no food or sleep for three days. What I had sighted proved to be a French torpedo-boat which sent a boat to us and picked us up and attempted to tow machine to port, but it was impossible as airplane was rapidly sinking. The French rescued our instruments and attempted to rescue motor, but airplane sank before they could accomplish this. Airplane was a complete wreck when she sank. She sank about one half hour after we abandoned her, so you can readily see we were rescued just in the nick of time. I wish to speak of Mr. Smith's behavior, which was admirable. He stood regular watches with us and consulted me before making any definite move. He was brave and courageous from the first. I never heard a whimper from any one no matter how close we were to death. The accident was no one's fault and I am ready to make a statement as to the courageous actions of all.

### *Copy of Brady's log (the machine's observer)*

Orders for flight received at 10 A.M. November 22d, 1917, to engage submarine off Saint-Nazaire. Left station in plane 87 about 12 P.M. with Pilot Smith, Mechanic W. M. Wilkinson, and myself as Observer. Flew at altitude of 200 meters, but on account of low fog, descended to 100 meters and continued flight in direction of Île d'Yeu. Kept sharp lookout and after about twenty minutes flight sighted object in water off port bow, and after flying in this direction and circling about it, discovered it to be a bell buoy. Off starboard side another object sighted which proved to be a three-mast schooner laying off the coast of Île d'Yeu. We then headed for Île d'Yeu. Off this coast a number of fishing smacks observed and a careful study of the underlying section was made. We then headed in direction of Belle Isle. Observed tramp steamer with small row boat in tow. After close study of this section for about forty-five minutes and not sighting land retraced our line about thirty minutes when motor failed and we were forced to make a landing in a heavy sea. Mr. Smith and I became very seasick.

After testing engine and looking over wing section, motor started on cranking, but could not leave the water, forced to lighten cargo, and cast off two 100-pound French bombs by re-

## KEN SMITH IS LOST AT SEA

moving detonators and replacing safety plugs and carefully releasing them from their apparatus. Failed to get off water. Released pigeon with message at 2.20 P.M. Wilkinson then made a thorough study and inspection of motor. Discovered that right gas tank was empty and left one full. All hands seasick and working under difficulty, bailing water and making necessary repairs. Engine water-soaked as well as magnetos and all other mechanical parts. Syphoned gas from left to right tank, stood watches until light enough to work around gas tank. By this time all hands were wet through to the skin. Sighted two lights during night. Drifted southward. Second pigeon turned loose 7.40 November 23d. Saw blimp in the distance. We signaled, but no response was received. Started motor at 10 A.M. and taxied until magnetos dried out. Another attempt was made to leave the water in face of heavy sea, which was still running high. After getting engine up to maximum speed and on our step to leave, we were hit by sea on left wing, carrying away landing wires and crushing both lower and upper wings. Engine section struts and wires adrift. A consultation was then held regarding our future conduct, and saving of life and property. Bailed water which was now coming in through the opened seams. Other methods of keeping afloat by trying to dismantle motor proved futile on account of our weakened condition from exposure. We stood four-hour watches, two on at a time. One man lying out on right wing to balance, another bailing water, while the third attempted to sleep. Mr. Smith taking first watch on wing section. Wilkinson bailing and I in the cockpit reposing. Watches relieved at regular intervals or when needed. Our only hopes were to ride out night. Hourly notes were made on direction of wind. Rain set in, making life intolerable. During my watch 11 P.M. 23d, to 2 A.M. 24th, on outer wing section, Mr. Smith climbed out on left wing section, stripped it of its fabric in order to shield me from exposure and using all means available for my comfort. On account of condition of left wing it was decided to cast this section adrift. Boat at once listed heavily to starboard and took in great quantities of water. Too weak to take off right wing. Our chances now seemed hopeless. Still we continued the best possible way to keep afloat. This was accomplished by one man's weight being placed on port side of boat while bailing at same time, the other men tearing away right wing section. We were giving up hopes as right wing

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was submerged and boat was sinking. At this period Wilkinson sighted an object on our starboard beam. All hands believed it to be a submarine. Mr. Smith destroyed maps and gave instructions as to what action should be taken in case it proved to be such. It later proved to be a French torpedo boat. We were taken off in a boat. Every effort was made to salvage the wrecked plane but she sank within twenty minutes after abandoning her.



## CHAPTER XXX

### THE WAGS AT LE CROISIC

As a result of Kenneth Smith's misadventure, no more planes were sent out from Le Croisic alone or lacking rations and life-saving equipment. It was a lesson that had to be hammered in by experience. The French methods were haphazard and negligent, trusting rather to 'Mon Dieu' than to their own care and resources. As Henry Landon emphasizes it:

I think I am safe in saying that it was due to Ken's accident that our naval aviation stations on the French coast reached such a high degree of efficiency in so short a time. We learned what to equip our planes with and installed every possible emergency appliance, at the absolute dictation of K. R. Smith. He knew. And the wisdom of it was proved later, in other forced sojourns on the ocean in crippled planes. It was my own ignorance that had sent him out alone, for one thing. He didn't have even a sea anchor, or a Véry pistol. When he saw a dirigible in the distance, he had nothing to signal with. We remedied all that. For food we saw that the planes carried hard-tack and canned tomatoes which were bully to quench a thirst. And three men in one of those boats made too heavy a load, so we took one out. All of which was a darned good thing for the rest of us, but rather tough on Ken. He had to be the goat.

On December 4th another 'Alerte' was sounded. Landon, Coombe, and Smith responded, the 'Allo' coming from somewhere between Belle Isle and Quiberon, in the coastwise convoy track. They sighted several American escort vessels, yachts and destroyers, and the cruiser *San Diego* outward bound, but no German submarine. The hair of Reginald Coombe had reason to stand on end when one of his bombs broke its forward support and dangled

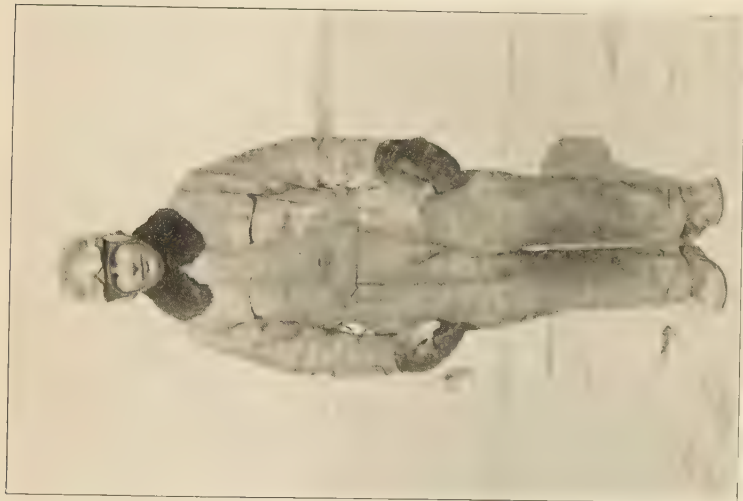
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loose. He could not drop it at the moment because he was flying over a flock of French fishing boats. The wretched bomb was swaying and banging against the frame of the aeroplane and Coombe didn't know what might be due to happen. It seemed as if he would never pass clear of the fishing craft. When he did, he let that bomb drop in a hurry. Smith and Landon were not in sight, so he barged around a bit longer and then went home to the station.

There he found that Kenneth had failed to show up. This was disconcerting. It came only two weeks after his other disappearance. The crowd fidgeted for several hours before a message informed them that Ensign Smith had flopped down with motor trouble and drifted ashore at the island of Houat. A U.S. mine-sweeper delivered him safely at Le Croisic the next day. The two accidents wore on him. He felt the strain, on top of much hard work, so the C.O. sent him off to Paris on temporary duty for a week or so of recuperation.

It was not long after this that the French formally turned the station over to the American organization. The occasion was made impressive, with a great deal of rank and ceremony. Admiral Sims, Captain Cone, and Captain Jackson were among those present as it happened that they were making an inspection tour along the coast. A French admiral added to the display. The crew lined up at quarters to receive them and they were 'piped over the side' in proper Navy style. The station band played the 'Marseillaise' and 'Yankee Doodle.' And as an extra flourish, two planes went scooting off on the first 'All-American patrol.'

Sam Walker liked this touch of high life so well that he wangled an assignment to report to Colonel House in Paris for duty with the Inter-Allied War Conference. The wires were pulled through a cousin of Walker. It was a transient job, for a fortnight only, long enough to give an



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FREDDIE BEACH AND GEORGE MOSELEY



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industrious aviator a chance to rest and divert himself. He was a sort of assistant private secretary who attended to getting cables off to the Secretary of State and President Wilson, but refrained from telling them what he thought about things. He enjoyed it immensely, mingling with Prime Ministers, Generals of high degree, and the dazzling assortment of gentlemen who professed the utmost harmony and suspected one another's motives. It was difficult, of course, for a member of the Wag Crew to withhold himself modestly in the background, but Walker claims no credit for influencing the conduct of the war.

When the Conference adjourned, he returned to Le Croisic, having 'learned many facts which were very startling and of the utmost significance at that time.'

Later in December an order came to deliver two D.D. seaplanes to the fellow compatriot, 'Chip' McIlwaine, at Moutchic which was about one hundred and seventy-five miles to the southward. Landon flew one of them, selecting Quartermaster Gillespie as pilot for the other. He was a rattling good man and later received deserved promotion to the rank of ensign.

The first start was a failure. 'It was due to my excellent work,' confesses Landon. 'I let my motor die and my plane was blown tail-first against the sea wall and smashed the flipper. Of course I was heartily congratulated by the C.O. and my admiring friends. The Razz Blatt chorus was like an echo of Palm Beach.'

The second start was more auspicious. The two planes flew down the coast for forty miles when Gillespie landed and signalled 'motor trouble.' The pair of them pulled up on the beach of a small town called Porine. Landon went to look for a telephone. Gillespie was able to mend the trouble, however, but when they were ready to go on, the entire population had trooped out to see the noble *Aviateurs Américains*. The children were dismissed from school and



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marched in procession to the beach. As Landon was about to tell the mechanics to start the motors, a large bouquet of flowers was presented to him by one of the blushing tots. Great applause! The splendid American flying-man, Monsieur Landon, made a speech in French. It was brief, eloquent — consisting of '*Merci beaucoup*' and '*Vive la France.*' A prominent citizen kissed him on both cheeks. *Encore!*

They flew a little farther along the coast and came down at the hamlet of Croix-de-Vie, Vendée. Gillespie needed another rest, according to Landon. You can believe it if you like. It is to be suspected that they craved more bouquets and receptions. At any rate, the town did itself proud. It was decided to spend the night in hospitable Croix-de-Vie. The proprietor of the hotel welcomed them like long-lost sons. The mayor stationed a guard around the planes. After breakfast next morning the populace gathered while the heroes awaited the high tide. They had to pose for photographs. Then they built a runway of seaweed across the sand so that the machines could be shoved into the water. Meanwhile the villagers were saying it with flowers — enormous bouquets for Landon and Gillespie, tied with ribbons of red, white and blue.

Speeches in response, fluent and sentimental — '*Merci beaucoup*' and '*Vive la France.*' The cheers were of the loudest! It was all *très joli*. The so gallant *officier*, Henri Landon, sat down in his machine and gave the signal. It was to open wide the motors to test them before the plane was shoved into the water. *Peste! Sacré baptême! Nom d'une pipe! Mille tonneres!* The sand of the beach was whirled in a violent storm. It dashed into the faces of the assembled villagers. It blew off their hats. It disarrayed the skirts of the demoiselles, who screamed and fled. Ah, those naughty propeller blades that played such havoc with the farewell assemblage on the beach of Croix-de-Vie!

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The machine rose grandly and circled the town. It was a sentimental gesture. Playing to the gallery, it dived and boomed close to the houses. Ah, the people were frightened and scampered for shelter as hard as they could. Some of them were still running when last seen. *Mon ami*, what do you think of this Henri Landon?

They squared away for La Pallice to make another stop on this trip to Moutchic. You suspect something? It is quite right. Here at La Pallice, this Henry Landon broke a part of his machine. He called it the starting dog. Ah, ha, he was a poor dog at starting! Much better at stopping, eh? He stayed right at La Pallice for several days while Gillespie flew on to Moutchic with two French planes as an escort. Henri, he was getting mended, so he declares. Were there attractions in this La Pallice? It is to wink the other eye, monsieur!

When he departed, he rated *three* French planes as his escort. Evidently he had made a hit *magnifique*. This time he actually flew to Moutchic, arriving in a rain-cloud. He is frank. He confesses that he continually desired what he calls 'beach applause.' Therefore he did 'a tight spiral' to land at Moutchic and almost scraped the paint off a hangar. Awaiting him there was his friend, the Chief Pilot, McIlwaine, whose *nom de guerre* was 'Le Chip.' They embraced. Also who should join this fraternal reunion but Bartow Read? Overjoyed, Henri Landon, in order to show his esteem, touched him for three hundred francs. It was repaid several months after that, we are informed. Is that credible?

There was a telegram awaiting Landon. He was to go back to La Pallice and thence fly to Le Croisic in the Tellier which had been left there, broken down, by Reginald Coombe. Bad weather delayed this journey. Landon was impatient. He wished to be home (at Le Croisic) in time to welcome Santa Claus. This he did, leaving La

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Pallice on the day before Christmas. Not so many stops, you will observe.

Coombe had gone to Paris on two days' Christmas leave where he dined with Curtis Read, McIlwaine, 'Ken' Smith and Freddie Beach. Before leaving, he was careful to make preparations so that the station might enjoy the holiday. He had been elected treasurer of the wine mess by unanimous vote. He was recognized as the *connoisseur par excellence*. How he functioned is best told in the words of a comrade.

Reggie would disappear at times for hours on end. When sighted again he would be zig-zagging (perhaps in fear of enemy subs) toward the quarters with his arms full of ancient and cobwebby bottles. His methods were investigated by the intelligence section. He and the old French wine merchant were fast friends, it seems. The latter used to light a candle and lead the expert Reginald way back into the dark recesses of his cellar, among the rows of dusty casks and enchanting racks of vintage bottles. Coombe knew his way about so perfectly that he never fell over anything. Down in that fragrant, delectable cellar, the pair of them discussed wines like two oracles. It resulted in the merchant's pressing this bottle and that on his congenial guest as samples for his approval. It is not generally known to the other members of the Unit, but the sagacious Coombe is said to have financed his Italian campaign from his earnings as treasurer of the wine mess at Le Croisic.

It was necessary for the station to obtain food as well as drink. This is obvious. Aviators deserved the luxuries as well as the necessities of life. Therefore a novel system of foraging was devised. A plane on convoy duty with American transports entering St. Nazaire would fly low enough to read the name of some particular ship. A day or so later a Packard car would drive over from the air station to pay a social call. Officers of the transport were invited to Le Croisic for dinner — sometimes the captain, always the supply officer. They were pleasantly enter-

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tained, Coombe doing his duty as wine treasurer, and giving a hop in a machine if the day was fair. As the result, the air station was invited to name what supplies it needed from the transport. The keys of the ship were presented. A truck did the rest.

But we must be getting on with the war. The patrols were carried on, day after day, in the cold and windy winter weather of the sullen Bay of Biscay. It was a hard service. There was satisfaction in the reports that submarine sinkings amounted to almost nothing in this sector and that the air station was given credit for effective coöperations with the French and American surface patrols. The enemy was growing wary of the coast and cruising farther seaward where the hunting was poor.

On January 20th, the regular patrol consisted of two planes whose pilots were Coombe and an enlisted man, Weddell. Coombe came back late in the afternoon, after dark, and reported that Weddell had been forced to land about twenty-five miles southwest of the station. Walker was officer of the day. He set out at once in the launch called the admiral's barge, laying a course according to the directions furnished by Coombe's chart. Rounding Le Croisic point, it was seen that a storm was gathering in the south. The feel of the wind was ominous and the swell ran heavy. The seas broke over the bows of the small barge which labored ahead very slowly. If the conditions should grow no worse, it would require at least four hours to cover the twenty-five miles. Sam Walker tells the rest of it.

The sea was very rough and I regarded my responsibility of being in command of this barge as too great to permit myself to be seasick. However, I felt that there was going to be trouble soon and I saw the crew and a chief petty officer, who had been in the Navy for fifteen years, sitting aft watching me. I turned around about five minutes later to reassure them that nothing was wrong when, to my amazement, the sight I saw made me



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laugh so that it drove away all feeling of seasickness and made me feel that I had conquered by having them sick first. At the end of four hours standing on the deck of this ship I was soaked through to the skin and freezing cold. A heavy fog had come down and a storm driving hail. The sea was still running large. We sent up several rockets at this time to signal to the distressed plane but failed to receive any answer.

Finally after cruising around in the vicinity for half an hour, we saw a faint rocket on the horizon in answer to ours. I immediately headed over towards it and, sooner than I expected, came upon the plane which could be seen outlined on the top of a wave, towering above us when we were in the trough of a sea. The problem was how to save both the men and the plane. I consequently threw a line to the plane and started towing them. Above the terrific roar of the sea and the driving rain, after we started to tow them, a sharp crack was heard and, sending up another rocket, which was the only means of light we had, I saw one wing sticking up vertically in the air, the other one having knifed into the sea, and both men climbing on the side of the plane.

This proved that all attempts to tow would be futile so the paramount issue was to save the men. I gave orders to pull the plane by the tow line close to the barge, but every time it would get near it would threaten to smash. The pilot of the plane, Weddell, was on its bow ready to jump. He picked a time to jump when the plane was nearest the barge, but they separated very suddenly and he landed in the water with a heavy combination fur suit weighing him down. The problem looked serious, but with a couple of boat-hooks the crew managed to hold off the plane, which in the meantime had closed in again and was threatening to crush him, and with the other boat-hooks they pulled him up on the barge. The observer next took his chance and, jumping when they were close together, landed safely on the barge.

We then took the anchor and tied it on to the tow line, and cast the plane off with the anchor and plenty of line. All this had taken about one and one half hours and it was then 10 o'clock. The question now was to navigate back to Le Croisic through this heavy fog without knowing our exact position. The sea was increasing all the time and the storm was furious. All of us felt it was going to be a hard thing to find the Le Croisic



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light and avoid the shoals and treacherous coast. We had a French sailor with us who knew the lights, as he said, and after navigating for four hours he spied a light which he pronounced with the greatest assurance to be Le Croisic. We had been proceeding at half speed as it was too dangerous to go full speed, not knowing exactly where the rocky coast was. But when we saw this light we headed for it and I had just instructed the engineer to proceed full speed when there was a most terrific crunching sound on the port side amidships and the barge rolled completely on its side, shipping a great deal of water, stopping the motor, and extinguishing all the lights.

The situation was very uncomfortable and I expected at any moment to have the barge dashed to pieces on the rocks, but it righted itself and the next wave happened to carry it over into deep water. With a great deal of trouble the engineer managed to get the motor running so that the lights came on. We found an ugly tear in the side of the ship through which the water was pouring. One of the men endeavored to keep the water out by stuffing newspapers and waste into the hole, but it managed to come through in spite of this and was rapidly approaching a level with the carburetor, which we all knew would mean the motor must stop. Consequently we hugged the shore, missing further rocks by mere chance, and aiming for a sandy spot.

I realized by now that the light we had been aiming for was not Le Croisic light, but to the north of it. We managed to run along at a very slow speed into Le Croisic harbor where we beached the barge on a big sand bar, all very much relieved. We then proceeded to send up every signal that we had on the ship in order to arouse the station at Le Croisic and get them to send us a relief crew and to take us off. It was then after 4 A.M. and we were all pretty well exhausted after twelve hours of that sea, being frozen and sopping wet the whole time. They managed to send out a dory with some more men on it and took us off and landed us at the station.

A new detachment of pilots and observers was sent from Moutchic on February 21st. They were in charge of Bartow Read who remained at Le Croisic until the latter part of May. Two or three days after his arrival, Walker and Coombe went to Tours to spend a week-end. There

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they had a bit of flying at the land station which had been taken over by the American Army. Before they left Tours they found in a French newspaper a paragraph which fairly stunned them. 'Al' Sturtevant had gone to his death in the North Sea. It was the first break in the brotherhood of the Unit. Losses were to be expected, but this drove the realization home like the sudden thrust of a knife.

It was only a week later that the word came to Le Croisic of Curtis Read's grievous death by accident at Dunkirk. His brother Bartow bore it most courageously. In one of his letters to his mother, written from this station, he told her:

It makes us very proud of Curt to think of all the people who knew him and loved him so well. The greatest thing of all, for me at least, is to see how every one, even his closest friends not only loved him but really respected him and his fine ideals and his pure life. In the last few years I have met a great many men of Curt's age and a great many of his friends, and I can recall only a very few who equalled his fine, high-minded life. Now, of course, he is no longer with us in body, but his great life and glorious final sacrifice are not like the ordinary death — a thing of sorrow — but a great joy and a noble memory for us to bear always in mind and to be strengthened by. So, Mother, do not be sad. Be proud and happy to have been the mother of such a son. . . .

## CHAPTER XXXI

### ÎLE TUDY AND BOMBING A SUB

IN extending the American naval air service on the French coast, it was decided to place a station close to the harbor of Brest, the most crowded of all ports in the gigantic disembarkation of troops and supplies. The site selected among the bold headlands and ramparts of rock was Île Tudy, near Quimper, and including in the patrol sector the famous reefs and lighthouse of Penmarche. To Kenneth Smith was assigned the task of organizing the flight patrols of this new station.

Although nominally Chief Pilot, he directed most of the work and was the driving force at Île Tudy. The C.O. was a non-flying officer who was sensible enough to perceive his own limitations and to let 'Ken' run his own show. The confidence was justified. A month later Henry Landon joined this force. He enjoyed the experience and describes it in some detail.

The D.D. planes at Le Croisic were transferred to Île Tudy and I flew one up when I left. There was not a whole lot of duty for me except flying, as Ken had everything under control, barring the Executive, Ensign Lamanski. He was a rigid sort of person, and his chronic objection was that 'you couldn't do a thing like that aboard ship.'

Almost every evening Ken and I took a walk and discussed our plan of campaign against Lamanski. He was really a help to us, as, without his opposition we might have taken too much for granted, and his outbursts of anger were never anything to worry about. I always backed Ken and he always backed me, so that we were two against one. We also had the advantage over him because we had everything thrashed out in our walks, so as to be in absolute accord when the morning conference was called.

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The two months that I was at Île Tudy, were, in many ways, the best of all my stay in France. It was a small station, and, thanks to Ken, as complete and efficient as any one could wish for. I am not positive, but I think the station holds the record for one day's flying time (seaplanes) namely fifty-two or fifty-four hours. Also I think my sixty-nine hours thirty minutes for the month of May comes fairly near a record for individual pilots. These two records, or near records, were made possible by the flying organization which Ken developed practically single handed.

Our sector was a good one, as convoys passed by twice a day on an average. Also it comprised the famous lighthouse of Penmarche, where the equally famous German submarine, called Penmarche Pete, did so much damage. This is not a myth, as I can back up my statement from the fact that my brother who was on convoy duty along the French coast, told me the name of 'Penmarche Pete' was well known. Also, it was in the vicinity of the lighthouse that Ken sank his submarine.

On the subject of subs, I am just a little envious, because I have always claimed that that particular sub of Ken's was my property. I had the morning patrol that day, and was on my way to meet a convoy. The second plane came down, and I had to go back and report it. On the way in I met two of our planes going out, and when I got back found that an 'allo' had come in. I immediately ordered another plane out so that I could get off again, but while it was warming up, the second patrol came in and we saw that Ken's plane did not have its bombs on. The rest of the story is his, as well as the sub's, but I still claim he stole it from me!

One day a tremendous convoy of American ships was reported and we sent three patrols out (six planes). It was much further out than usual and was well protected by destroyers. I was out and having a wonderful time as the air was great, and it was a clear day. Without any warning my propeller flew apart and nearly shook me out. I shut off everything, with a sort of sick feeling all over me, as I didn't dare look around for fear of seeing the tail in pieces. I was fairly high up, and I thought I would never get to the water, but, arriving there, felt much better. Luckily only the engine bed wires were broken and one side of the bed, so I did not have to wear the motor for a collar. It was about noon and the ocean was smooth as glass so my observer

## ÎLE TUDY AND BOMBING A SUB

and I lit cigarettes and waited for help. One of the American destroyers came up shortly and the officer on the bridge called out '*Voulez-vous secours?*' That made me sore, so I got out our little flag and held it up. It produced the English language immediately, and I then told him that I was all right and our station boat would be out soon, so off he went. About four o'clock an off-shore breeze came up and I commenced to wonder where the boat was. Also there was no land in sight. Jimmie, my observer, broke open the hard tack and tomatoes and we had a very fine tea, but our cigarettes had run out, so we looked around for something to do. I decided it was about time to start home, so Jimmie got out the hack-saw and we trimmed what was left of the propeller so as to try and get an even balance. Then we started the motor, and it idled fairly nicely. By speeding up a trifle we were able to make some headway, but soon the wind got too strong and we had to shut off. Besides the motor was ready to jump out at any minute. Then I decided to leave a trail, at least, so we took the plug from the oil tank and let some out on to the deck of the boat, and this in turn running down the sides made quite a nice trail as we were blown backwards.

About 7.30 P.M. two planes were sighted by the watchful Jimmie, and everything was rosy again. One of them was Ken, of course, and he circled me and went off again. Later he came back and I saw he was alone. Landing to leeward, he taxied up so that he brought the entering edge of his wing against the trailing edge of mine, and yelled to get aboard his plane. Jimmie got aboard, but on looking round saw that I was alone and not wishing to desert me, made a leap back for my plane, but landed short, so that he was half in the water. Ken had to make a circle and do it all over again. By this time it was fairly rough and a misjudgment on Ken's part would have meant that both planes stayed out all night, if not longer, but I never saw a neater performance in my life, and Île Tudy's king took us both off and home, leaving my plane to drift. We got in about nine o'clock, just as it was getting dark, and I was rather pleased to be ashore again, and in front of a good meal. The plane was picked up about three o'clock in the morning by our boat, and the crew were very much surprised to find no one on board.

I once told Di Gates that the worst thing that happened to me abroad was being caught with a broken propeller out of sight of land with an off-shore wind. He smiled condescendingly and



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

asked me how I would like being caught *in* sight of Ostend with an *on* shore wind. I begged his pardon and hurriedly changed the subject.

The story of the submarine for which Kenneth Smith received official credit and honors as having bombed and assisted to destroy is fully told in the following documents:

U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION  
ÎLE TUDY, FINISTÈRE  
23 April 1918

FROM: Ensign SMITH

TO: Commanding.

SUBJECT: Bombs dropped on a submarine.

1) The flight Section was composed of two seaplanes D.D. 1.25 and 1.22 carrying respectively Pilots R. H. HARRELL and Ensign K. R. SMITH, and observers H. W. STUDER and O. E. WILLIAMS.

2) The flight Section left Île Tudy, hugging the coast and afterwards making for the West by zigzag with the intention of seeking an American seaplane which had taken on the water with motor troubles.

3) Seaplane was found West of Cap Penmarch. This information was communicated to the watch at the Center and the flying section then left to accompany the convoy.

4) About 11.30 a convoy of approximately 20 ships, making for the South was found 6 miles to the Northwest of Cap Penmarch.

5) The weather being misty it was thought best to keep behind the convoy on the look-out for detached boats. After having got behind the boats, we began to describe a large circle on the sea. After having completed a half circle, thus putting the cape parallel to the ships' route, a very distinct furrow was perceived by the two seaplanes, this furrow appearing to follow a route parallel to that of the ships.

6) Seaplane D.D. 22, having reached the indicated spot, went near the water to discover the cause of this eddy. A large spot of oil and air bubbles coming to the surface were clearly perceived.

7) It was decided to drop the bombs as quickly as possible.

8) The first was dropped at 11.50 and the other as soon as it was possible to put the seaplane back in position.



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## ÎLE TUDY AND BOMBING A SUB

9) The first bomb fell right in the middle of the eddy and the second fell less than 10 feet from the first.

10) Meanwhile D.D. 26 Pilot R. H. HARRELL and Observer H. W. STUDER, dropped a phosphuret buoy to mark the spot.

11) D.D. 22 then turned towards an American destroyer, which on hearing the explosion had left the convoy and come in the direction of the attack, to inform him of the attack.

12) D.D. 25 then remained on the spot with a view to discovering the result of the attack, if anything should appear.

13) A correspondence buoy was put on the water indicating that bombs had been thrown on suspicious bubbles. The exact spot was shown to the destroyer by the seaplane which went ahead to show the way. It was then that we understood the very good idea which had inspired the two men of the D.D. 25. Their maneuver allowed the exact spot being shown to the torpedo destroyer without lost time.

14) The American destroyer threw 3 grenades.

15) In the meanwhile a French gunboat had drawn near.

16) We left the spot at 12.53, and about 12 miles on the Southwest of Penmarch we perceived the convoy en route for the South and another convoy of about 16 ships making for the North. The 2 seaplanes then rejoined their center.

Signed K. R. SMITH

Transmission from the Commanding Officer

To Capitaine de Corvette Commanding the P.A.L.

### *(Translation)*

REPORT OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE AERIAL PATROLS  
ON THE LOIRE concerning a submarine attack made on  
April 23d, 1918, by an American seaplane of ÎLE TUDY.

The present report has been drawn up after receipt of the enclosed file emanating from Île Tudy, and completed by verbal explanations of Lieutenant Smith.

On April 23d, at 10.25 A.M., a section of American Seaplanes from Île Tudy met two coastal convoys consisting of twenty boats, six miles northwest of Penmarch.

About 11.30 A.M., as the section circled the convoy, to seaward, the crew of the two seaplanes saw very distinctly in the direction of the convoy at about two miles off, a suspicious furrow, very white, caused, in my opinion, by the periscope of a

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

very fast-going submarine or by the conning tower of a submarine coming to the surface.

The two seaplanes immediately flew towards the furrow. Nothing was seen but an eddy which moved parallel with the convoy and in the middle of which small bubbles of air and oil kept coming to the surface.

Ensign Smith immediately ordered two bombs to be dropped. The first fell exactly at the front end of the eddy, and the other about ten feet in front of it. The two bombs exploded, and after the explosion, eddy and bombs had disappeared.

The second seaplane, D.D. I 25, did not drop its bombs, although the back of a submarine had been seen, but only drew near, ready to attack, as soon as the submarine should come to the surface, and threw a phosphorus buoy. In the meantime, Ensign Smith turned towards an American Patrol Boat, the *Stewart*, which had left the convoy at the explosion of the bombs, and was coming toward the seaplanes. He explained the situation by means of a correspondence buoy.

According to the information officially given me, this patrol boat must have seen the damaged submarine under the water, and must have sunk it by means of three depth charges. The French gunboat, *Ardente*, also left the convoy, but arrived at the scene of action later than the *Stewart*.

The two seaplanes returned to their base at 11.54, after having recognized, at twelve miles southwest of Penmarch, the north-bound Convoy consisting of sixteen boats.

Shortly after, this convoy passed the same place, without being attacked. This, in my opinion, offers a serious presumption in favor of the exactitude of the 'Stewart' claims. Further presumption may be found in the following fact to which our Allies at Île Tudy seem to have attached very little importance: 'The following day, Ensign Landon signalled that in the neighborhood, in the course of the Patrol flight, he perceived a very large spot of oil.'

(Signed) J. VASCHALDE

*Captain de Corvette Vascalde, C.P.A.L.*

AT ST. NAZAIRE, May 5, 1918



# ÎLE TUDY AND BOMBING A SUB

U.S. NAVAL FORCES OPERATING IN EUROPEAN WATERS  
FORCES IN FRANCE  
U.S.S. *Prometheus*, Flagship

BREST, FRANCE  
April 23, 1918

FROM: Commander U.S. Naval Forces in France.  
TO: Commander U.S. Naval Aviation Force, Foreign Service.  
SUBJECT: Report of attack on submarine.

1. Returned.

2. The incident reported in the within correspondence is an excellent example of coördination between avions and surface craft, and it is believed that it resulted in the destruction of an enemy submarine. A report of the incident based on the report of the U.S.S. *Stewart* is contained in Information Bulletin No. 6 of 30 April, extract from which is appended.

3. An oil slick is still visible in the vicinity in which the destroyed submarine is supposed to lie. There is a depth of water of 40 fathoms there, and dragging operations will shortly begin with a view of definitely establishing the destruction of the submarine.

4. It seems to be well established that this submarine when sighted by the avions was endeavoring to attack the southbound coastal convoy.

WILSON

## *Extract from Information Bulletin No. 6*

On April 24th when the southbound coastal convoy was off Penmarch, two avions were seen dropping bombs about two miles to seaward of the convoy's position. The *Stewart* left the escort and proceeded at full speed. A French destroyer was seen coming from the northward heading for the same spot. One avion coming directly toward the *Stewart* dropped a buoy and the observer then indicated the direction of the submarine by pointing. A clear and distinct wake was picked up and at the end of the wake an object could be seen just breaking the surface.

The *Stewart* ran down the wake, heading directly for the object. The wake led to seaward but the broaching object turned off to the right and just before the *Stewart* reached the spot was at right angles to the original wake. One of the avions dropped a smoke bomb very close to this spot. The sea was smooth with

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

a light swell, and the conditions were perfect for tracking a submarine. Just before the *Stewart* reached the spot, the broaching ceased, but silhouetted in the swell a large dark object was seen in the water underneath the disturbed surface. The *Stewart* passed within fifty feet of the dark object dropping two charges in close succession. The water brought up by both these bombs was very dark and heavy oil spread on the surface from this spot. Three other bombs were dropped which brought up clear water; one on the broach, and two while circling after passing the submarine.

The bombs were dropped so close to the submarine and the force of the explosion was so great that it seems impossible that the submarine could have survived. Depth setting 80 feet, depth of water about 40 fathoms. It was observed that the columns of water which brought up oil were more spread out and not so high as the columns of clear water. The oil was unmistakable and spread over a large area. The *Stewart* remained near the spot until 4.00 P.M. and then proceeded at full speed to rejoin the convoy in accordance with orders from chief of escort.

At this time several French patrol vessels had arrived and were patrolling the vicinity. Oil was still coming to the surface but in no definite bubbles. This is an excellent example of the efficiency and coördination that can be obtained when avions and destroyers are working together.

The *Christabel* returning to Brest in coastal convoy two days later passed very near this spot and reported that oil was still visible on the surface.

### *Croix de Guerre*

Patrouilles Aériennes  
de la Loire

Copie d'une Depeche Ministerielle en date du 9 Juillet, 1918, adressé à Monsieur le Vice-Admiral Commandant-en-Chef, Préfet Maritime à Lorient.

Attribution de la Croix de Guerre  
à des Officiers Américains du centre  
d'Aviation de Île Tudy

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaître à la suite des propositions du Capitaine de Vaisseau Chef de Division les Patrouilles de la Loire, que vous m'avez transmises avec avis conforme, le 13 Mai, 1918, que j'ai accordé à M. le Enseigne de Vaisseau

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K. R. Smith et au Chef Electricien D. E. Williams, du centre d'Aviation Américain de l'Île Tudy, les citations suivantes à l'ordre de l'Armée.

Dans la journée du 23 Avril, 1918, ont découvert un sous-marin ennemi qui allait attaquer deux importants convois, l'ont bombardé avec beaucoup de décision et d'habileté et ont probablement causé sa destruction.

Conformément au désir exprimé par le Commandant des Forces Navales d'Aviation des États Unis, les Croix de Guerre correspondantes à ces citations lui seront adressées par mes soins pour être gardées en dépôt jusqu'à ce que leur remise aux intéressés soit autorisée par la législation Américaine.

Applications Île Tudy

Enseigne Smith

Chef Electricien Williams.

Pour le Ministre et par son ordre signé,

SALAM

P.P.C.

Le Capitaine de Corvette Vaschalde, Commandant les Patrouilles Aériennes de la Loire

T. VASHALDE

Pour copie par délégation du  
Prefet Maritime Signé, Deschard.

U.S. NAVAL AVIATION FORCES, FOREIGN SERVICE

PLACE D'ICNA, PARIS, FRANCE

From: Commander

To: Lieut (j.g.) Kenneth R. Smith, U.S.N.R.F.

U.S. Naval Aviation Headquarters, Paris.

Subject: Croix de Guerre.

1. The Commander takes great pleasure in forwarding herewith a Croix de Guerre received from the French Ministry of Marine, awarded you for your eminent and conspicuous conduct on April 23, 1918, in connection with your attack on an enemy submarine.

2. The above decoration will be held in custody by you in accordance with the appended circular until authority is granted to wear this decoration.

HUTCH I. CONE

*Ordre National de la Légion D'Honneur*

HONNEUR PATRIE

Le Grand Chancelier de L'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur certifie que, par Décret du 9 Avril, 1919, Le Président de la République Française a conféré à M. le Lieutenant K. R.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Smith de la Marine Américaine la décoration de Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur. Fait à Paris, le 9 Avril, 1919.

Kenneth Smith himself has something to say about 'Hen' Landon at Île Tudy:

He put in a wonderful lot of flying, more than any other American pilot in France from February to June. It was remarkable how much enthusiasm and pep he would show day after day. The weather conditions had no effect on him and he was discontented only when it was impossible for him to go out on patrol. Our sector was a good one as the water was deep close inshore and allowed a submarine to run in and lurk in way for the convoys without fear of rocks or shoal water. A lot of ships had been attacked in this vicinity and we had to keep busy to show that we were on the job.

On June 10th, Smith and Landon were detached and ordered to Paris. There Smith was detailed to aviation headquarters as aide to Captain Craven who had the general supervision of the American seaplane stations in France. Kenneth traveled about more or less, on official errands, until, early in August, he was sent to Italy to fly the ill-fated Capronis. Landon was lucky enough to escape being side-tracked in Paris and went straight through to Rome.

By this time the crowd at Le Croisic was beginning to break up. The three members of the Unit, Walker, Coombe, and Bartow Read, joined the pilgrimage to Italy to risk their necks in the precarious invention of Signor Caproni. They were tired of the ocean patrol. Any change was welcome. How they made use of pull, diplomacy, and persistence to bring it about is disclosed by the ingenuous Samuel Walker:

Eddie McDonnell had visited Le Croisic in February and had given us a word picture of the Northern Bombing Group idea. This looked like a good bet, so Reg Coombe and I determined to

## ÎLE TUDY AND BOMBING A SUB

try to get in on it. In May I had an opportunity to go to Paris and then to Dunkirk. We wished to transfer a Ford ambulance from our station to Dunkirk, so I asked the skipper to let me deliver it instead of sending a couple of bluejackets. I was really entitled to leave. Having driven a Ford ambulance for six months on the French front, I was a qualified chauffeur for this jaunt. Taking a chief petty officer with me, I rolled along to Tours, had lunch with several pals, and shoved through to Paris the next day. There I found the 'Loot' and others who could talk nothing but Northern Bombing Group. They raved about it until I was convinced, more than ever, and extorted a promise that the Yale bunch at Le Croisic should be kept in mind, after doing nine months of rough patrol stuff. When I went back to the station, we wrote letters to Bob Lovett, reminding him that, under no circumstances, must these brave lads be overlooked. And what did we get? Action over the enemy's lines? Beyond the Alps lies Italy! Try flying over them in a Caproni!

Of the other members of the Unit stationed on the French coast, McIlwaine went to Clermont-Ferrand in June for the special course and was thereafter attached to headquarters of the Northern Bombing Group until November, 1918. Freddie Beach also left Moutchic by way of Clermont-Ferrand, and in July joined 'Di' Gates's station at Dunkirk where he stayed most of the time until sent to England on August 30th.



## CHAPTER XXXII

### FARWELL PLAYS A LONE HAND

JOHN FARWELL had begun to feel worried lest the war might slip out from under him while he was still marooned on duty at Pensacola. The long lane had a turning, however, and it led him across the Atlantic early in April of 1918. A brief stay at Paulliac in charge of a motor convoy for the delivery of cars and he was called to England for instruction in armament at Uxbridge. On August 9th he turned up at Fromantine on the French coast to join the air patrol for anti-submarine and escort work, playing a game much like that of Le Croisic and Île Tudy. He stayed there three weeks and finished his active service as armament officer at Saint Trojan, Charmante Inférieure, remaining at this post until the Armistice. His was a lone hand in that he was pretty well removed from other members of the Unit who were associated together on the French coast or who met each other in moving about from place to place. Of his experience abroad he writes in a more or less general way:

Sailed for Europe early in April 1918. Was of course very much interested, as everybody else was, by the camouflaged ships. I was fortunate enough to go on a mail steamer which did not go in convoy. One of the most impressive things I ever saw was the way the destroyers met us on the exact minute before sun-up away out on the ocean. It seemed almost supernatural, the way the flash from the destroyer searchlight found us out of the darkness just as prearranged.

On the trip we had the usual torpedo scare, a six inch gun being shot off, whether for amusement or not, I do not know, directly above the dining room when we were all at luncheon. The naval officers all sat at one table and were rather proud of

## FARWELL PLAYS A LONE HAND

themselves as they all stayed in their seats while the Army officers rushed out the door. I think we did lose two paymasters by the same route, but we did not count them.

In traveling about in England and France, conditions changed a great deal between April, 1918, and the Armistice. At first there were very few Americans, which gradually changed until finally at the time the Armistice was signed, I remember very well we saw so many friends in walking down the streets of Paris that it reminded one of walking down Chapel Street in New Haven and you simply waved your hand in a friendly greeting rather than stop and talk, for if you did the latter, it was almost impossible to get anywhere.

England was a bit of a contrast, as far as the people were concerned, from pre-war years. Traveling in English trains, they would frequently talk to you, which was something I, at least, had never thought of their doing, and everywhere you went you found signs of their thoughtfulness and consideration for their American allies, leaving me, at least, with a firmer impression of what a wonderful race they are.

In Paris at the same time, the Germans were shooting into the city with their long-range guns, lending a very strange atmosphere to an apparently peaceful place. They said a million people had left the town on account of it. How true I don't know, although I believed it and thought the moral effect the Germans got from their raids and bombing of peaceful combatants in their homes was great and it made people around you very angry and eager to fight.

I was lucky enough to take a convoy of motor trucks from Bordeaux to near Brest and could not help but compare the apparent peacefulness of the average French farmer's life with that of our own farmers.

On May 22d I was sent to Uxbridge, England, for instructions in armament. Before leaving America I had to take a physical examination and ran into serious trouble on account of my eyes. This I did not worry about very much as I figured that once I could get where flying was done and they needed fliers there would be no trouble about that.

While in England I had a good chance to appreciate how thorough the English are in everything they do. They took eight weeks for what in America two weeks was allowed, but we know our subject from top to bottom. I was astonished at the

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ease with which the English students apparently memorized facts. Possibly their training in public schools helped them out but I am sure the young officers assimilated knowledge a great deal easier than any of the classes I was in at New Haven.

On returning to France, I was stationed with a former friend, Wadley Capehart, at Fromantine, a small station which, like many others, had large and elaborate plans for a tremendous number of airplanes. The actual plans of most of these stations, as it later turned out, were a great deal larger than necessary. For example, in the three weeks I was there we only heard of one submarine and knew of its movements by the sinking of ships at least two days before it was near to where we were. This one particular submarine which came along the coast was sighted by a dirigible while guarding a convoy. The machine foolishly was on the down wind side of the convoy so that the submarine casually came to the surface and fired its torpedoes at the convoy. When the dirigible started to go for it, it naturally made very slow headway against the wind which left it with a speed very little faster than the submarine which brought out its gun and started shooting at the dirigible, driving it away. Why it was not able to sink the whole convoy after that, I do not know.

At St. Trojan, where I was armament officer, they had just had a very severe explosion of bombs, killing and wounding over twenty people on the station. It was a pretty good example of how carelessness can get you into trouble. The bombs themselves were a French make which the local French arsenal knew nothing about except that they went off if they fell on their nose. Both ourselves and the French used no precaution about safety catches on the bombs or putting them in a heavy and secure rack. The explosion was caused by the bombs falling from an insecure rack and having no safety catches which would prevent the firing pin driving into the train of powder that explodes the bombs. For a lot of people who had been careless with their bombs, they had certainly changed when I got there. The problem was rather a simple one, simply to find out how the bomb was constructed and then design a proper rack and safety catch for it. It was rather amusing to see how the same people who ten days before had carelessly been throwing bombs around amongst themselves, put a good half mile between themselves and even such a small thing as a detonator when it was being handled.

Just before Thanksgiving we hoped to have a chicken dinner

## FARWELL PLAYS A LONE HAND

by way of a little extra celebration. There were quite a few chickens in the neighborhood. At the price eggs had been sold to us it might well have been said they laid golden eggs but contrary to the proverb, the French refused to cut off the head of the chicken who laid them. The result was, the Captain who was a Southerner gave four negroes shore-leave with instructions that if we did not have a chicken dinner on Thanksgiving day they would get no more shore-leave. The next morning we were awakened by cackles that sounded very much like a chicken dinner.

I was fortunate enough to get leave the day before the Armistice was signed, arriving in Paris about two hours before it was announced, and have never seen such a sight anywhere. For four days the Place de la Concorde was simply black with people. Everywhere you walked you met a parade of relieved men and women singing and shouting, marching behind a drum, flag or anything they might happen to have. During the whole four days, enthusiasm was as great as among the students on the winning side after a Yale-Harvard game. How much longer it continued I do not know. Almost immediately I had a chance to get back to America by taking a draft of men, which I did.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

LIEUTENANT (J.G.) JOHN V. FARWELL, U.S.N.R.F.

Period from 4 December, 1917, to 1 March, 1918:

Organized and acted as first commander of 1st Squadron at this station (18 seaplanes). Recommended for promotion to Lieutenant (j.g.).

E. F. JOHNSON, *Lt. Cdr. U.S.N.,*  
*Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Fla.*

Period from 30 September, to 20 November, 1918.

Has a very excellent technical knowledge of aviation ordnance and valuable practical experience in same.

V. C. GIFFIN, *Lt., U.S.N.,*  
*N.A.S. St. Trojan, France*

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE BIG BOATS AT FELIXSTOWE

THE British flying base at Felixstowe on the North Sea was in all respects different from the French training schools and the patrol service along the coast of the Bay of Biscay. For one thing the Royal Navy inflexibly maintains its traditions of tautness, order, and discipline in peace and war. From ancient days has been handed down the doctrine that Britannia needs no other bulwarks than her fleet. Drake and Nelson live to-day as puissant influences. France has no such dominating naval heritage. As one observes her ships, they seem curiously cluttered up and at loose ends. The depletion of the struggle of 1917-18 which shifted her marines and sailors to fill gaps in the trenches impaired naval efficiency and morale. The air service was bound to feel it.

The contrast impressed Albert Sturtevant and John Vorys when they reported at Felixstowe on December 1, 1917, after two and a half months in France. Unlike most other members of the unit over-seas they had no organization or construction work to undertake, no green men to train or hangars to build. They were sent to join the war flights of a station already running smoothly and on a large scale. Kenneth Whiting, who was there when they arrived, explained another aspect of it: 'Your mission is diplomatic as well as military, boys. We expect you to learn all you can of the game, but you are also the first officers of our naval aviation service to be attached to a British outfit like this for active duty. Remember that. You are to make good with them personally as well as in a



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military way. The impression you make will affect the attitude toward those who may come later.'

This was somewhat disturbing, especially when they encountered the temperamental reserve of a British naval mess which was slow to thaw. During this period of breaking the ice, they found a vast deal to interest them in the routine and equipment of the station. It seemed like a huge place, enclosed on the three land sides by a high iron fence. In the gravel parade ground was a tall mast from which rippled the white ensign. Crossing this area, past the shining ship's bell, you found a path leading to the harbor. At the left stretched an almost endless row of huts for the men. Looming conspicuously were the three great seaplane sheds, each three hundred feet long by two hundred feet wide, and beyond them the concrete embankment and runways.

Here was a stirring view of Harwich harbor and Shotley — a tangle of light cruisers and destroyers lying in the river, a floating dock, perhaps a British submarine slinking in between the guard-ships at the boom, returning from a perilous and secretive patrol of five or six days in the Bight of Heligoland, mine-sweepers foaming out in pairs to search for the destructive eggs that Fritz has sown in the war channel overnight. Harwich was the most important naval base on the East Coast. It was here that the fighting sea-dog, Commodore Sir Reginald Tyrwhitt, flew his pennant over the famous cruiser division which operated as a tactical unit of the Grand Fleet.

All these activities and the Felixstowe air station were under the general command of Rear Admiral Cuthbert Cayley, a bluff and hearty sailor of the blue-water breed who took a strong liking to the young American aviators. At Felixstowe the C. O. was Lieutenant Commander O. H. K. Maguire, R.N., otherwise known as Number one, who was a stickler for naval style and manners. The hours

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were tapped off on the big bell. 'The ship's company' was divided into watches and any one leaving the station was 'going ashore.' The men when marching out of the yard were 'the liberty boat.' Divisions, when all hands were mustered on the parade ground or 'quarterdeck' in the morning, was smartly done. And a bagpipers' band marched the crew to mess with a swing and a swagger. Needless drill was sensibly dispensed with, but speed, skill, and accuracy in carrying out orders were continually emphasized. The station force consisted of sixty officers, of whom half were fliers, and about 1400 men.

Commander J. C. Porte was largely absorbed in his experimental and test work with the big flying-boats which he was foremost in developing. He had designed his original boat while connected with the Curtiss Company at Hammondsport in 1914. Several copies of it had arrived from the United States in 1915. A little later these seemed like comic machines, nose-heavy with motors on and tail-heavy in a glide. The stout lads who tried impossible feats with them over the North Sea usually had to be towed back by annoyed destroyers.

In the fall of 1916, improved and very much bigger flying-boats built at the Curtiss plant to specifications supplied by Commander Porte, were shipped to Felixstowe. By this time he had produced several experimental boats. He carried on his plans with a scratch collection of draftsmen, with mechanics and carpenters he had trained himself, and obtained the needed materials only by masterly and incessant wangling. It all sounds like the troubles of naval aviation in America. He frequently began work on a new boat and then asked the authorities for the begrudged permission. But he was a genius in his way and he somehow managed to bring out one improved type after another

His final boat, known unofficially as the 'Port Super-

## THE BIG BOATS AT FELIXSTOWE

Baby' and officially as the 'Felixstowe Fury,' was a monster triplane with a wing-span of 127 feet, a total lifting surface of 3100 square feet, a bottom of three layers of cedar and mahogany half an inch thick, and five engines giving 1800 h.p. It weighed a total of fifteen tons. On a test flight it carried twenty-four passengers, seven hours' fuel, and five thousand pounds of sand as a make-weight.

This cruiser was too big and too slow for the regular patrol service. The boat finally used for this purpose was a trim, clean craft of ninety-six feet from wing-tip to wing-tip, a forty-two-foot wooden hull, flat-bottomed with a hydroplane step. The motors turned up 700 h.p. The cruising speed was sixty knots which could be speeded to eighty. It was an imposing sight to see the working party of twenty men roll one of these boats out of the shed. The armorer's squad had fitted on the four Lewis machine guns and had tucked into place under the wing-roots, two on each side of the hull, the four bombs, set to detonate about two seconds after they hit the water or a submarine.

The crew consisted of the first pilot, second pilot, radio operator and engineer. The first pilot had to be very competent. He was the captain of the ship who took the boat out of the harbour and brought her in again, flew her on the hunting ground and in an air fight, and saw that his crew did their duty. He sat in a little padded arm-chair on the right-hand side of the control cockpit which ran across the full width of the boat, some distance back from the nose. It was covered by a transparent wheelhouse. Before him on the instrument board was the compass, air-speed indicator, altimeter, bubble cross level, inclinometer which gave the fore-and-aft angle, oil pressure gauges and engine revolution counters. Close to his hand were the engine switches and throttle control levers. Directly in front of him was an eighteen-inch wheel, like the wheel of a

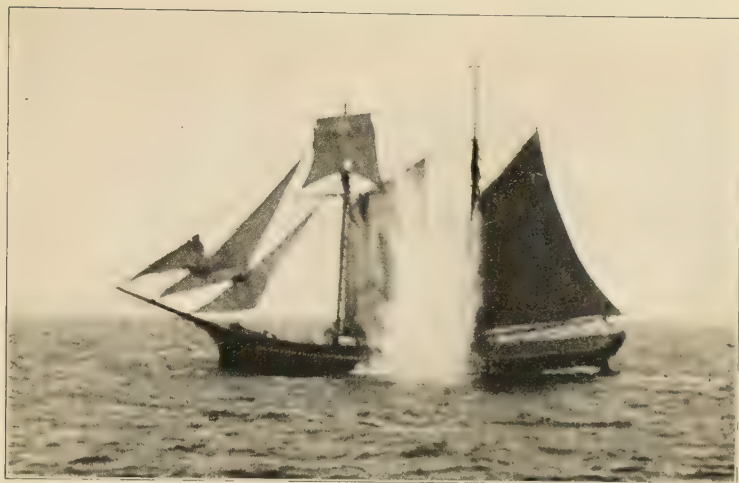
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motor car, but carried vertically upright on a wooden yoke. Besides this control, he worked the steering rudder with his feet.

The second pilot stood beside him. If a sub was sighted, he ducked forward into the bow cockpit, in the very nose of the boat, which contained a machine gun, bomb sight, and release levers. He was also the watch keeper, reporting buoys, lightships, wrecks, and working the position on his chart. The radio operator sat just behind the first pilot. The engineer was in a cockpit amidships, surrounded by fuel tanks, and a maze of piping and gadgets too numerous to mention. Two wind-driven pumps forced the gasoline up from the main tanks to a small gravity tank in the top plane.

From the waterfront at Felixstowe you gazed out over the melancholy, turbulent North Sea. To the southeast, ninety miles away, was the Belgian coast with the German submarine and seaplane bases at Zeebrugge and Ostend. One hundred and eighty miles across, to the northeast was Terschelling Island and just around the corner from it the Bight of Heligoland. Half-way on a line between Felixstowe and the Hook of Holland, fifty-odd miles from either place, the red, rusty North Hinder lightship marked a sandy shoal. It belonged to the Dutch and was therefore unmolested. A large lantern gleamed on its one steel mast and its name was painted in conspicuous white letters along its sides. This North Hinder light vessel played an important part in the patrol and bombing campaign against the German submarines.

The German submarines that moved down through the southerly part of the North Sea were commerce destroyers and mine-layers. Their commanders kept them on the surface through the Felixstowe area because they could run submerged no more than two hours at eight knots without exhausting their batteries. And low speed, two



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knots which could be maintained for forty-eight hours when submerged, was of no value to an impatient Fritz anxious to reach his hunting ground in the open sea.

The exact positions of these U-boats was obtained from time to time, when their skippers reported to Germany by radio after passing through the Straits of Dover, homeward bound, or when well on their way outward bound. The wireless messages were picked up by two direction-finding stations in England and the cross-bearings plotted to obtain a 'fix.'

These radio fixes demonstrated that, as a rule, the U-boats passed close to the North Hinder lightship as a mark by which to set their courses. A system of search was devised at Felixstowe, called the Spider Web, with the North Hinder lightship as the centre or hub. The Web was sixty miles in diameter and swept an area of four thousand square miles. It was an octagonal figure with eight radial arms thirty miles in length and with three sets of circumferential lines joining the arms at ten, twenty, and thirty miles out from the centre. Eight sectors were thus provided for patrol, and all kinds of combinations could be worked out.

The tables were turned on Fritz, the hunter. Here he was the quarry, the fly which had to pass through one of the sectors of the Web. The flying-boat was the spider. A chart, carefully kept, showed the positions, dates, and times of the day that submarines were fixed by wireless, and it was from this chart that the sectors which it seemed promising to search were determined. The pilots went booming out from Felixstowe to the North Hinder, followed a radial line as instructed and covered the designated patrol area, sweeping from the outside to the centre. It was a method far better than cruising about at random, and achieved definite results.

Another routine duty was the 'Beef Trip.' This was a

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convoy of merchant ships which ran two or three times a month between England and the Hook of Holland and was alleged by the flying-boat escort to carry Dutch beef to the British, and good British beer to the Dutch. In the dark hours of the specified morning a dozen to twenty cargo steamers would gather in the war channel near the Shipwash and there be picked up by destroyers and light cruisers from Harwich. The Felixstowe air pilots were sent out the night before to patrol the secret route across the North Sea and look for lurking U-boats craving beef and beer.

When the convoy sailed, the fliers scouted ahead. At the plodding pace of the Beef Trip, eleven hours were required for the passage. The flying-boats were therefore sent out in relays, remaining with the surface craft until relieved. Each pair of Felixstowe machines was out five and a half hours. The work called for extreme nicety in navigation in order to make contact with the moving ships at the correct time and position. At first the results were rather ragged but eventually it became a skilled evolution. The pilots were informed, in a letter of appreciation, that before they took a hand in the game, the crews of the light cruisers and destroyers were kept at battle stations throughout the entire trip, but that after the flying-boats accompanied them half the men were allowed to go off watch.

The active service against the enemy in which Vorys and Sturtevant took part consisted, in the main, of these regular patrols, the Spider Web which carried them well over toward the German coast, and the Beef Trip to Holland. The American pilots were in training for some time, however, before being assigned to the war flights. The British manner soon warmed into a very genuine friendliness and cordiality. In fact, the Yanks received so many attentions that it was almost embarrassing.

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At first there were four of them. The others were Lieutenant Hull, U.S.N., and — er — Ensign Fallon. A little later Ensign Philip Page joined them. After being there only four days he was accidentally killed in a training smash. Bob Lovett arrived on this same date, December 14th, his mission being to observe and make notes and concoct ideas. Vorys somehow failed to grasp the importance of it or else he was in one of his curdled moods, for he made mention:

Bob Lovett came along and with his usual *sang-froid*, *savoir-faire*, etc., got through his training — found out how the wheels of the station ran round, armed with note-book and pencil and the diplomatic question — spent his spare time mooning over a picture of Adele and saying harsh words about the noise some people made getting into bed much later than he did — received and sent big, confidential letters from and to Captain 'Hutch-Eye' Cone and Admiral Sims, and the aforementioned lady, and then was off again to pastures new.

There is another glimpse of Lovett at Felixstowe, this time in action. Vorys goes on to say:

One phase of our entente cordiale was playing football, in which Commander-in-Chief Lovett was a sensational feature. I played on the regular team, but there was a special game at Christmas between the officers and the men. The rank and file laid up grudges for a whole year against their officers and then played this game to square accounts. It was rugged stuff. And Bob did himself proud. If Adele had known about it she would have lost at least twelve years of her beautiful life in just thinking it over, because Bob was risking fame, honor, limbs, and pulchritude in that struggle. Personally I was so badly scratched and cut up that I couldn't shave myself. Romping up to London on leave, I dragged myself into a barber shop and crawled into the so-called chair. I was in a khaki uniform and the barber said, 'Ah, sir, you have been in the trenches. Barbed wire, I suppose.' And I crisply retorted, 'Naw, a football game.'

This suggests the martial mustaches with which John

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and Al were decorated when they presented themselves at Felixstowe. They had been permitted to sprout at Hourtin by way of diversion. It was a sporty rivalry, getting off to an even start with Fearing and Cabot as judges. After three weeks of intensive cultivation it was ruled that Sturtevant had won by a hair, or several of them. His mustache came out strong and red with a Teutonic turn-up at the ends. He carried it proudly to Saint Raphael where the mistral blew through it with a whistling sound. At Felixstowe, however, the British officers expressed frank disapproval. It was the only flaw they could find in 'Al' Sturtevant. Clean-shaven or a full beard, but no mustaches in the Royal Navy! 'Al' made the sacrifice reluctantly, the first day cutting off the points, bringing himself to final obliteration on the next day. Then he turned on John Vorys and insulted him in public for wearing a smudge on his upper lip that disgraced the American uniform!

These were happy days, to be recalled with a smile and a sigh. The training period was not difficult or burdensome. They began in the small Americas, such as they had learned to know during the summer at Port Washington. From this they stepped up to the H-12s which were almost out-of-date for the war patrol and were more useful for instruction. Then they were graduated into the big F-boats which were easily handled after the smaller machines. In these they were able to solo after a total of four hours or so. The station had an elastic way of doing things. Vorys explains it as follows:

While receiving flight instruction we were also going to ground school which, if it seemed informal and rather casual, was thorough and practical. The padre taught navigation, and a darned good teacher he was, too. He invented a gadget for finding courses and distances that was simpler, cheaper, and quicker than the Battenburg board, but it was not accepted for our



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Navy because Ken Whiting said it made the pilots mentally lazy, and because Fallon . . . *(deleted by the censor)*.

We had machine gunnery and bombery with Uncle Partridge, the ordnance officer and did firing and dropping practice under the British first pilots who practiced on their days off duty. That really completed the ground school. We were, like the Persian youth, 'taught to ride and shoot and speak the truth.' Yet somehow or other, too regularly to be accidental, an old pilot would volunteer to show us some new wrinkles or a ground officer — Radio, Intelligence, or Engineering — would carelessly happen to explain his pidgin to us, so that by the time we were ready to go on patrol we were rather well informed on what a young pilot should know. It was a peculiarly British kind of school but it worked, although you could not have drawn a blue print of it.

The social life was jolly and quite elaborate to American eyes. A Briton is seriously annoyed when a war interferes with his sports or his dinners. The officers' mess at Felixstowe observed the formalities, the C.O. presiding, the members dressing, with special song nights and parties for guests. Here it was, a combat station and the most active one on the British coast, with picnics and golf and tennis until winter weather came, and dances at the Felix Hotel every week. It reminded the Yale men of Peacock Point.

Death and glory and harmless gaiety incongruously intermingled! After waiting for a British pilot, John Hodson, who was late in returning from patrol, Vorys and 'Al' trotted along to one of these hotel dances without him. People were beginning to wonder what had happened to him when he came breezing in, immaculately attired and bubbling over with excuses and apologies. Silly rot to be late, but he had been detained. Couldn't help it, really. Pressed for an explanation, he was too busy trying to fill his dance programme. This vital business under way, he found time to say that he had been engaged in a running fight with a flock of Hun seaplanes. He had shot

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one of the blighters down, but they had riddled his own machine with holes and chased him off his course some forty miles before he could fetch the coast again. A nuisance, rather, with these nice girls who had saved him almost no dances, what?

It was at the hotel dances that our two Yale aviators met the fascinating Mrs. Dowson. Vorys forgets to crab for once and raves in this language:

Her father was an Irishman and her mother came from the Argentine. She had an ivory skin and dark blue eyes and was very, very lovely. A lady with a past but still a lady! She had come down from London with a captain of the Bedford Regiment and was supposedly his fiancée. Al and I both took a shine to her; in short, we were smitten. We being who we were, the delightful Mrs. Dowson fell for Al and his charms and skill as a dancer. Although I had hoof and mouth disease I will say it as shouldn't that we were better dancers than most of the Britishers. We went big with Mrs. Dowson, but mostly Al. She liked his tall figure and blond hair and his hot line and all that. And I was trailing along.

Well, it was a congenial party. And we were making plans for meeting her in London on our next leave, and so on. She was indubitably one of the fairest of her well-known sex. And then, one day or one evening, when Al and I went into the hotel bar to get a — to get a match — the A.P.M. of the District sauntered in and steered us to a quiet corner of the bar while we were — were drinking our match, and he said, while he kept an eye on Al who was the lady's favorite (I am forced to admit):

'Young men, I have a very awkward subject to take up with you and I hope you will not think I am intruding. It concerns a certain lady who is being very carefully watched by our Intelligence Service. I cannot tell you all about it, but the evidence leads us to suspect that she is a German secret agent. In confidence I will inform you that the British army officer who brought her down here will probably be court-martialed. It would be a great pity if two of the first American officers to be attached to a British command should, because of an indiscretion, be also involved in court-martial proceedings. I hope you will pardon me for breaking in on your personal affairs, but I

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feel it necessary to offer this friendly hint. Will you be good enough to join me in a drink?’

After that [continues Vorys] we danced with Mrs. Dowson and were scrupulously polite, but nothing more — no, indeed, nothing more. In fact, she intrigued us about as much as a case of smallpox. We never heard the sequel. She was clever enough to be a spy. She could certainly find out everything you knew, and with a little persuasion you would tell her a great many things you didn’t know.

These dances and the wonderful nights in the mess room when we would sit around and bat up flies and play bridge and sing were part of the diplomatic mission which was very important in our estimation and tremendously interesting.

It was singularly fortunate that in his last days at Felixstowe there should have been with ‘Al’ Sturtevant a close comrade such as John Vorys who could preserve for the rest of the Unit the incidents and impressions that otherwise would have been lost. They lived together in an old manor house a mile from the station proper, which was turned into officers’ quarters.

We were on the ground floor [says John] and every one would drop in there. We used to come over from tea on the five o’clock car. They had an automobile to carry the officers to and fro. A crowd would pile into our room and have a wonderful time arguing about flying, making plans, improving about everything that had been invented, etc. There was where Al came out strong, for he had been through Sheff and he knew the scientific part of it and how to work out the theories. With his slide rule and formulæ that he always had pat, he could put things on paper and make us understand.

He and I were pretty homesick at times. We had been together a lot and knew each other well so we talked about home, and he would tell me about his folks and vice versa, and discuss girls. As I look back on it, these times we had together were the best of my life, just because we had such talks. I don’t know how to explain it, but we’d always find something to talk about.

At Christmas time we Americans went on leave together to London where we stayed at the Grosvenor Hotel. We met Ken

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MacLeish, Dave Ingalls and Shorty Smith there and had a joyful reunion and a great deal of gossip about what the various boys from Huntington were doing. The last night of our leave Al and I went to see Bruce Bairnsfather's play 'The Better 'Ole' and Al was very much taken with it and, as he always did, remembered the songs and sang them most of the time.

The social life at Felixstowe, or our part in it, was more important than such stuff usually is. We had been told to make a good impression but you didn't have to tell Al Sturtevant. He made a tremendous hit with the Englishmen and Canadians at the station and among the ladies of Felixstowe. When dolled up in his evening clothes he was as handsome as a picture and sure to make the hearts flutter. Among men he was just crusty enough not to take anything from the Limies and so smooth that they would take anything from him. With his caustic wit and readiness to show the British their defects, he was the good fellow who could stand being teased in return. And his ardent Americanism never jarred them, for he had the polish and good taste that met their ideas of what a gentleman should be. If the sparks flew, that winsomely boyish manner of his was enough to cool them.

As a flier he soon won their respect and admiration. He struck his real stride with the big boats. He had always been a cautious pilot, very steady, with the tremendous endurance he had shown as an oarsman. In the big boats, these qualities combined with his scientific aptitude and training brought him to the front. He qualified very quickly and was considered a remarkably fine pilot. We were started in as second or assistant pilots and the veterans were keen to have Al with them. I was not so eagerly sought after.

We flew together only once. This was in one of the small Americas. First Al would fly the boat and then I would take it over. Then we came down on the water and sat and talked and ate chocolate. Al razzed me when I took the controls, pointing to the instruments and making nasty remarks about my rotten style, and of course when he was flying the boat I was far from polite in my criticisms. As a matter of fact, we did very well.

The English lads used to love to hear Al grouching. He would make a thorough job of it, and finally, since everything else was rationed in England, we had to ration him on resigning from the Navy. This was always the climax, 'Well, I will resign,' and so



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we limited him to two resignations a day. After luncheon and dinner we used to loaf with the crowd in the ward-room and the favorite amusement was throwing the bull. The custom was to wait for Al to start it. He was so popular and such an artist at kidding, that all hands thoroughly enjoyed these sessions.

He developed into the best of the American pilots. He figured out navigation with his slip-stick while I was correcting my first mistake. He drew his own charts and fixed up some wonderful gadgets to simplify navigation. We sent them to H.Q. but they were probably lost in red-tape. I found them useful in my later work at Hampton Roads. Whether he was holding his boat on her course within a gnat's ear or rolling calmly and safely through the bumps over Harwich in a norther, he was at home and the master of his bus. There was a lively competition as to who should get him as No. 2. Nobody fought over me, or Fallon.

Vorys describes the dinner given by Admiral Cayley on board the station flagship *Ganges* at which he and Al were guests. It was the present writer's pleasure to be among those at the dinner. At the time I happened to be visiting Admiral Cayley at his home on shore.

A memorable episode, this party in the admiral's cabin of the obsolete steam frigate which would never go to sea again! She embodied the traditions of the Royal Navy and was kept in commission because an admiral had to have a flagship, chiefly as a place to entertain visitors. That night the boyish American officers came over the gangway in some awe and trepidation. It was a novel experience. They were conscious of their lowly rank. However, they kept their emotions up their sleeves with their handkerchiefs and dreaded a stiff, ceremonious evening.

Commander Porte was there, and Captain Lyon of the *Ganges* and gruff Commodore Sir Douglas Brownrigg, Chief Censor of the Admiralty. All these gold stripes frightened Vorys, as he frankly confesses. It looked as if this might be worse than the adventure of the Wags who girded on their swords in London. It was soon discovered, however, that Admiral Cayley was a capital host. The



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stories he told when the port went round had a kick to them. They were distinctly informal. The tension loosened. Nobody worried about his rank. They were all friends and good fellows together.

When the table was cleared, packs of cards came on. The game was 'Twenty-one.' The Admiral was the leading spirit. He had cause to regret it. The luck of the British Navy was banged in the eye. The American delegation won all the loose change, and the Admiral's orderly had to leg it to the paymaster's office to dig up more coin for the Yanks to take away with them. It was a happy way to end an evening, — for the guests. When, at midnight or thereabouts, the young gentlemen from Felixstowe paid their respects and adieus, it was handsome, debonnair 'Al' Sturtevant who called me aside to whisper:

'Mr. Paine, if you should happen to meet my father, or to write him when you go back to the States, do you mind telling him that you met me dining with a British Admiral?'

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### 'AL' STURTEVANT'S LAST FLIGHT

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich dead;  
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,  
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.  
These laid the world away; poured out the red  
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be  
Of work and joy, and that unhopèd serene  
That men call age; and those who would have been  
Their sons they gave their immortality.  
Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us for our dearth,  
Holiness lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.  
Honor had come back, as a king to earth,  
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;  
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;  
And we have come into our heritage.

RUPERT BROOKE

In January the two Yale men made their first war flights on the Spider Web patrol. When 'Al' Sturtevant came back from his second trip it was noticed that his bombs were missing. Great excitement on shore! Vorys rushed down to the runway, tickled that his comrade had attacked a submarine, a bit sorry that 'Al' had beaten him to it. The boat landed and taxied in. The crew was looking glum. 'Did you get it?' yelled the spectators. 'No, we didn't get it,' was the disgusted response. 'One of our engines conked and we had to drop the bombs to lighten the machine so we could fly home with one motor.'

Soon after this, early in February, the German air stations became more audacious and aggressive. They adopted new tactics of flying offshore in small, fast machines to interfere with the Felixstowe patrols. The leader was said to be Commander Christiansen, a 'full out merchant' and apparently a sportsman, who was credited by the Felixstowe pilots with developing the

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swift little monoplane seaplane. He was stationed first at Zeebrugge and later went to Borkum, after his Belgian base had been thoroughly bombed by the naval airmen and more or less wrecked by the *Vindictive party*.

As the story went, he was originally an officer in the merchant service who had taken up flying before the war. He now led the pilots of the Marine Krestemflegen Abteilung Flandern, and he and his crew were as hard as their name is to pronounce.

One of the Felixstowe patrols encountered four of these German planes. Of the two British boats one found itself in a lively scrap and brought down an enemy machine. A week later another patrol sighted a flock of eight hostile planes which flew in formation and made no effort to get action. Apparently they were scouting for practice and to acquaint themselves with the habits of the British patrols and escorts.

The North Sea weather was rough and rainy and cold in February, with days of violent wind or somber mists and clouds that kept the flying-boats in the sheds. As war pilots Vorys and Sturtevant were supposed to go out three times a week. Luck favored the one and broke wrong for the other. John drew clear days when it came his turn, while 'Al' was repeatedly held ashore by foul weather. At length 'Al' was two or three patrols behind his comrade. This fretted him, so in the evening of February 14th he suggested: 'You are on the list for patrol duty tomorrow morning, John. What do you say we trade the flight and give me a chance to catch up?'

Vorys thought it over. He was anxious to get ahead with his own flying, but 'Al' had his arguments ready. He called attention to the fact that Purdy was posted as first pilot and he wasn't rated as very much, and John would have a much better flight if he swapped patrols and waited another day. After a lot of amiable bickering as



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was their habit, Vorys gave in. 'Al' went to find the Flying Commander and obtained his consent. The Americans were treated quite informally and allowed to arrange such matters as this between themselves.

The detail of two machines was to join the convoy with the Beef Trip across to the Hook of Holland, taking the first relay in the early morning. It was advisable to get a good night's sleep when one was to turn out for active duty. The two friends left the mess soon after dinner and walked to their quarters in the old manor house down by the sea. Their beds were in the same room. They felt wakeful and in the mood for talk. Having undressed and crawled under the blankets, 'Al' remarked:

'Say, John, do you know what I have just been thinking? We are really in the war now. All that training at Palm Beach and Huntington and being run through those schools in France and sticking around here — nothing but student pilots ever since you can remember — and at last we are genuine war pilots. Great stuff, isn't it?'

'Right you are, Al,' agreed Vorys. 'Any more orations?'

'We aren't merely looking on any more. You know, we may even get killed.'

'That does happen in war, Al. But why gloom up this nice February night?'

Albert had something else on his mind. There were some letters he had been reading and a cable message from a girl he was very fond of, in which she said that she had heard from him but didn't understand.

'What do you suppose that means, John?'

'Well, if you will tell me what you wrote her, perhaps I can tell just how you fozzled it.'

'I'll be darned if I will.'

'All right. You are going out with Purdy in the morning and he is a rotten flier and you may never come back, so

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I'll have to sit down and read your mail anyhow. So never mind your old letters.'

This finished the conversation. They yawned, bade each other good night and dropped off to sleep. Never again would they laugh and talk together and exchange friendly insults. It was Vorys' last glimpse of his partner of the Yale Unit. Before daylight next morning a quartermaster went around to arouse the officers and men on the duty list. Sturtevant dressed and went out quietly so as not to awaken John Vorys. A hasty breakfast and he trudged sleepily to the sheds and among the great shadowy shapes of the flying-boats. A marine sentry turned on the lights for the working party of engineers and armorers. The two boats were rolled out. Their crews reported and waited for the motors to warm up with a roar that echoed across the harbor.

Purdy and Sturtevant were not in one of the big F-boats. They had been given a smaller H-12, one of the last of them to be used for the war flight. They were an inferior type of machine for this work over the North Sea, with the chance of combat. Their construction exposed them to attack from underneath in rear because of the system of bracing which spoiled the range of the machine guns mounted aft. A poor boat in which to fight against odds! The other members of the crew were the engineer, S. J. Holeridge, and the wireless operator, A. H. Stevensen.

The first pilot of the other boat was Faux, a South African. His second pilot was Bailey. They sailed away in the gray dawn to find the fleet of merchant steamers and destroyers and fly ahead of them in loops of five or ten miles. They were due to return to the station not long after noon. It was sooner than this, at 11.30 o'clock, when one machine came speeding back to Felixstowe. Its two pilots were greatly excited and their nerves unstrung. Faux reported to the C.O. and told the story.

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They had been flying ahead of the convoy, about half-way across the North Sea, with Purdy and Sturtevant in advance by about eight hundred yards. They were about 1200 feet up. The clouds were low, only a little way above them. Out of these screening clouds came ten Hun sea-planes, fast little single-seaters. In beautiful formation they dived from their ambush in the sky. Separating into two squadrons, they made for the two British flying-boats. Faux asserted that he tried to open up his motors and join forces with the companion machine, but the port engine went bad and he was unable to maneuver. In dodging close to the water, he had torn off his wireless antennæ and was therefore unable to send a signal for help. He dropped his bombs to lighten the boat and raced for home as fast as he could, pursued by several of the enemy for some distance. These, however, gave up the chase and turned to join the others which had engaged in a running fight with Sturtevant and Purdy.

This doomed British flying-boat, headed off by vastly superior numbers, was unable to steer in the direction of its own coast. When last seen it was moving to the southward, toward the Belgian shore, with five enemy planes close on its tail. Somewhere near Ostend it was so riddled with machine-gun fire that it burst into flames and fell into the sea. This was all that could be learned at Felixstowe of the fate of Sturtevant and Purdy, and their engineer and the wireless operator. The cruel fortune of war had tragically snuffed them out.

An attempt was promptly made to send out another machine in search, but the strong wind had freshened to a gale and the water was so rough that it was smashed before it got off. Commodore Trywhitt had taken his light cruisers and destroyers to sea to look for enemy ships which had made a raid in the Dover Straits. A message asked the flagship to try to find the lost plane or its

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wreckage. Three days later the Harwich Flotilla returned to port with no tidings. It was almost a week later when a report came through from a German source that 'a giant seaplane had been shot down in flames off the Belgian coast.'

Valiantly had they fought and died, unshaken by the odds, but the record of Faux, commanding the other plane, was tarnished by the disaster. It was not officially set down against him. In fact a Court of Inquiry cleared him of incompetency or cowardice. But among the comrades of his own mess there was the feeling that he had shown the white feather. His behavior had not measured up to their high code of 'in honor preferring one another.' It was the unspoken verdict that he should have stood by instead of leaving his partners of the war flight to perish alone. The two pilots, Faux and his companion, were told as much by their fellow officers. One of the latter wrote a book called 'The Spider Web,' in which he glossed over the reluctance to engage the enemy, saying no more than:

Purdy made a right-hand turn and steered in a southwesterly direction. Faux opened out his engines and started to turn after him, but his port engine failed and he swung away to the left, thus opening the distance between him and Purdy. Faux found that the air mixture control lever had moved forward with the throttle and had shut down one engine, but in the few seconds it took to put this right, three of the enemy were on top of him and four on Purdy's tail. Faux now had five seaplanes attacking him. He turned for England and roared over the sea, followed by the enemy. Each time they dived in they were met by a burst from the rear guns. Finally they kept well astern and sniped from long range. A bullet wrecked the two wind-driven petrol pumps and the wireless operator had to leave one of the rear guns and pump up petrol by hand.

For thirty minutes the chase continued and then Faux ran into a bank of mist. When well in this he turned sharply to the right, the Huns overran him, lost him, and he returned safely to harbor. This was the first boat shot down by the enemy and there was



## AL STURTEVANT'S LAST FLIGHT

keen sorrow in the mess over the loss of the crew, both pilots being exceedingly fine fellows and their ratings held in high esteem by their mess-mates.

The undercurrent of sentiment that the surviving first pilot might have done something nobler than merely saving his own skin was casting its ripples on the surface. They were perceived by John Vorys, for instance, and in confidence his British friends at the station expressed their critical opinions. Rumors reached the American naval headquarters in London. The Admiralty was frankly asked and the answer was as candid. Yes, the conduct of the fleeing plane had been unsatisfactory, but the Court of Inquiry had been unable to establish it by means of the evidence available. The case would be reopened, however, should the American naval authorities insist. On the other hand, the pilot in question felt his position very keenly and he would be most unlikely to err again. He was badly needed — pilots were in great demand — and wouldn't it be just as well to waive the punishment of dismissal and let him profit by the bitter lesson? This is how the matter was left. It was one of those complex situations, immensely difficult to handle, which occurs now and then in a war-time organization. It was no aspersion against the courage and ideals of the Felixstowe personnel as a whole.

The possibility that he had been deserted was acutely painful for the kinfolk and friends of Albert Sturtevant to contemplate, and yet it made his finish even more glorious. So blind and illogical and pitiless is war that it was his fate to be shot down with never a chance in his first contact with the enemy. And yet the life of this gallant gentleman and Yale athlete was not thrown away. He dared and paid the price, flashing out of life like a meteor, in all the splendor of audacious youth. It was his distinction to be the first American aviator, by land or sea, to lose his life in combat during the World War.



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Sudden death was a frequent incident of the North Sea patrol, in the air or among the heroic British submarines and the venturesome destroyers and the hardy trawlers that went out to do their duty. The loss of Albert Sturtevant, however, caused unusual regret among the officers and men with whom he had been associated for so short a time. This was reflected in the letters they wrote. Commander Porte, addressing Rear Admiral Cayley, had this to say:

I am writing to tell you how sorry we all are at the loss of young Sturtevant of the United States Navy. He had been at this station about three months and in that short time had thoroughly endeared himself to every one. He was an excellent pilot and extremely keen in all his work. His personal courage was of the highest order and his influence on the station was all for the good. The day before he was lost he came to me and asked if he could be given more work to do, as he felt he was not doing enough. All I can say is that I wish I had a few more like him. I would like very much that his relatives should know our opinion of him and how much we regret his loss.

Young Ensign A. W. Hawkins, who had joined the American training group after Christmas, felt moved to write to Admiral Cayley:

SIR — I would like to express my appreciation of the kind and courteous manner in which you received us and expressed your sympathy at the loss of one of our number, Ensign Sturtevant. We are all new at the game and this was our first experience of the kind, so very naturally it hit us pretty hard.

He was a very likeable, clean-cut fellow, as you know, and treated his work here as an absorbing game which he played cheerfully and well. He was just as popular with the English pilots as he was with us. He was what they term a 'full out' pilot and his death was a very real loss to our service. Our keenest regret is that he did not live to accomplish more of the good work which his energy and ability so amply promised.

Honest John Vorys, never known to say a word more

## AL STURTEVANT'S LAST FLIGHT

than he meant, added his tribute in a letter to the Admiral at Harwich.

SIR — I wish to express my thanks to you for the interest you have taken in the American officers here and especially for the thoughtful sympathy you have shown with us in the loss of our brother officer, Ensign Sturtevant. His death is a great loss to us, me personally because I was probably his closest friend here. We had been together constantly for three months in training and on leave. But I also feel that by his death the naval air services of both my own and your own countries suffered an exceptional loss. He was unusually well trained for his work, by his mechanical engineering course at college, his flying experience in America and in France, and by his thorough assimilation of the work here at Felixstowe.

He was constantly observing and obtaining information about the station, and writing down what he learned so that his notebooks have been a help to the American officers who came here later, and were invaluable in making our reports for our own headquarters. He was a good flier and although we were all inexperienced he put so much care and thought into his work as a pilot that the R.N.A.S. officers regarded him as especially capable and trustworthy.

After all, we Americans miss him most, and I think the British officers do, too, because he was so attractive personally, with his frank sincerity, his keen sense of the ridiculous, and his occasional outbursts of good-natured criticism, or 'grousing,' as the English say. We have lost an able and gallant officer and a true friend.

It was only a week after his death that Yale men of all ages gathered in New Haven for Alumni Day, on February 22d. Said the *Springfield Republican*:

This was Albert Sturtevant's day at Yale. Nominally it was Alumni Day and no greater gathering was ever seen for that occasion than that which witnessed on the Hewitt quadrangle this noon the unfolding of Yale's undergraduate service flag with its 912 stars. But these alumni, white-haired men of years and honors, lawyers and business executives in their prime, pink cheeked young officers from Camp Devens, gave their day to Albert Sturtevant.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Nearly three years ago it was, after seven lean years of terrible defeat and one of a victory by a margin of inches so finely drawn that the charge of 'fluke' would never die, Captain Albert Sturtevant's crew of eight stalwart oarsmen swept across the line in the historic Thames regatta, victors over the long triumphant Harvard by five decisive lengths. That June night Yale gave to Albert Sturtevant, too.

But the honor that was paid him today was a different kind of honor and for a different service. A few days ago press dispatches reported the death of Ensign Albert Sturtevant, United States Naval Aviation, flying in the North Sea, 'attacked by ten enemy planes.' By now Yale's roll of honor has more than one name on it, but today Albert Sturtevant was Yale's war hero. When the sons of Yale pledged themselves anew to the duties of patriotism, his was the name that they invoked.

At Felixstowe John Vorys had the task of getting his room-mate's personal belongings together so they could be sent home. That jest about looking after his mail had come true. It was the policy of the station to keep its losses to itself. And so John had to try to bluff it out, explaining to the ladies who had been so fond of dancing with 'Al' that he had gone away on leave or had been sent to another station. It was hard to keep smiling and answer all the questions.

When John went out on his next patrol, after a spell of bad weather, he was in a lumbering bus of an experimental type which could do no more than seventy knots wide open. He had no great confidence in the first pilot. And the other machine, flying in front, was in charge of Faux in whom John felt no reliance at all. He and his three ship-mates were uneasily of the opinion that if they should meet a flock of Huns the same thing might possibly happen again. They had no intention of being left alone to fight it out. Therefore they clung very close to the tail of the leading plane and could not be shaken off.

Faux semaphored, radioed, and flashed signals for



YALE VARSITY CREW, 1915  
Albert D. Sturtevant, number 5, captain





## AL STURTEVANT'S LAST FLIGHT

them to keep off and avoid the risk of collision, but there they stuck. There was method in it. Distance had no charm for them. Vorys glanced at the water now and then, but most of the time his gaze was turned skyward. The wireless operator, instead of sitting at his table, also stood with an eye cocked to the clouds. The engineer forsook his motors and spent the morning in the after ring-mount where he, too, could watch the heavens. According to John, they were an intrepid crew, *not!*

At last they sighted a small seaplane which appeared to be alone. The two boats made for it, still affectionately close together. It turned out to be a British machine from Margate which had strayed up into Felixstowe territory and was in a state of mind, thinking the two big boats were Germans. It was an uneasy experience until they recognized each other.

Vorys had one sensational voyage shortly before he was ordered to the United States on March 1, 1918. The bright minds of the Admiralty had conceived the scheme of towing planes across the North Sea on lighters and then letting them fly landward and bomb the German bases. This gave them a much larger cruising radius and they might do some effective damage. It was an idea, more or less fantastic, which was tried elsewhere. Vorys was elected to go in one of the planes. His recital lacks enthusiasm.

Destroyers towed the lighters out somewhere in the North Sea. They cast off and did pretty work in swinging in line, quartering the wind, and then steaming slowly into the wind to spout a film of oil to calm the raging main for us poor aviators. Barring a man who got knocked overboard in his sea-boots, things went very well up to this point. Water was let into the lighters to submerge them and we slipped off in neat style. After that! Oh my, oh my! My boat poked its nose under the first wave and got a thick layer of crude oil. It was plastered all over the wind-shield, the first pilot's goggles and the compass. He

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

bravely tried to take off without being able to see a thing. I was spitting oil and counting the bounces. Fourteen of them before we staggered blindly out of the oil and managed to get in the air! The only bus that managed to take off without a frightful mess was one that sneaked out of the oil patch into clear water.

We headed east toward Germany, with sealed orders. Of course I supposed we were bound on a raid, else why all the fuss with the silly lighter? However, we soon turned south. Then, after some amazing evolutions by the leading machine, we drifted off generally west, sighted the coast of old England about forty miles from Felixstowe, and so made our way home. It was then learned that we had been ordered to make a good course south-east and then do our regular spider web. It was a practice flight, not a raid as I took for granted, to try out the lighters and get acquainted with the route. The happy-go-lucky navigation of the leading plane had come near putting us over Germany without intending to pay a visit. The navigator in question happened to be one Ensign Fallon.

This was my last notable exploit. I never saw a German submarine or aeroplane while in English waters. I was under fire twice — in two air raids in London — but like many others of the five million I marvelously escaped damage.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### CAPTAIN CHRISTIANSEN'S OWN STORY

AT his home in Washington, Mr. Charles L. Sturtevant was vainly endeavoring to obtain information that might disclose to him how his son had met his death. All he actually knew was what Pilot Faux had reported at Felixstowe. When last seen, Albert and Purdy were still flying their machine, engaged in a furious machine-gun battle with an overwhelming force and steering in a southerly direction toward the hostile Belgian coast. In this manner had they vanished. The hope that they might have been made prisoners was soon extinguished. The German report that they had been shot down was accepted as trustworthy, but the circumstances were obscured. At the request of Mr. Henry P. Davison, the Red Cross headquarters in London made energetic efforts to ascertain the facts but was hampered by the naval policy of secrecy and the rigid restrictions of the censorship as shown in the following exchange of cable messages:

*Feb. 18, 1918*

AMCROSS — London

Cable immediately details death of Ensign A. D. Sturtevant, great friend of Davison family. Naval base Felixstowe London. Address care Lt. W. A. Edwards 23 Grosvenor Gardens.

CASTLE

*Feb. 20*

DAVISON — AMCROSS — Washington

For Castle — Please apply Navy Department which has all available information about A. D. Sturtevant. If we are to furnish cable information in these cases we must have code.

WELLS-ENDICOTT

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

AMCROSS — London

Navy Department has little information. I had hoped you would make special effort obtain some of facts at least. Do not understand why you need code for such cases. Do not believe code message will be accepted by censor.

DAVISON

*Feb. 25*

DAVISON — AMCROSS — Washington

Much regret it was impossible to obtain more information. We did make special effort to gather details but please also understand that Army and Navy do not like to have us send information in open messages and we have to be most careful not to cross wires with them in obtaining information. Navy Department courteous as always but strongly advised us against sending searcher to Sturtevant's station as they said nothing more could be obtained and all details then available had been sent to Navy Department, Washington.

ENDICOTT

*Feb. 27*

DAVISON — AMCROSS — Washington

Following from Sims to-day — 'Would suggest you cable Davison proposing that he inquire from Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, for such particulars loss Ensign Sturtevant as they may be in position to give. I do not consider it advisable to communicate details of loss of this officer in open cable to Davison. Feel confident he will be able to obtain information he seeks by application to Navy Department.

ENDICOTT

The dictates of military reticence in such a matter as this were hard for a bereaved father to understand. It made him surmise that something was being withheld from him. There was, of course, nothing to keep silent about at that time excepting the doubt as to the courageous conduct of Pilot Faux, and this was not made public for reasons already explained. A month after the disaster, all that had been learned was contained in the following letter from Commander E. R. Pollock, dated from the Paris headquarters of the U.S. Naval Aviation Forces on March 14th:

## CAPTAIN CHRISTIANSEN'S OWN STORY

MY DEAR MR. STURTEVANT:

For your information regarding the loss of your son, Ensign A. D. Sturtevant, U.S.N.R.F, the following cablegram from Vice-Admiral Sims is quoted:

Ensign A. D. Sturtevant missing from Felixstowe. Germans claim to have shot machine in which he was second pilot down in flames. Apparently his machine was attacked by ten enemy planes and destroyed. Further information will be forwarded when received.

Later the following was received in a written report:

Ensign A. D. Sturtevant went out on a patrol as second pilot on the morning of February 15. At noon the machine which accompanied his machine returned, having been chased by enemy aircraft. They reported that, when last seen, the machine in which Ensign Sturtevant was flying was heading south with five enemy scouts flying close on its tail. Apparently every effort has been made here to rescue the machine or to find traces of it, but so far the results have been unsuccessful, and it is feared that Ensign Sturtevant was either killed or possibly taken prisoner.

Enclosed are letters received by the Rear Admiral commanding the Harwich Forces from those who were associated with your son while on his last duty which speak for his splendid character, ability and courage.

All the officers of the U.S. Naval Aviation Forces join me in extending to you their heartfelt sympathy. It is a loss not only to his relatives and friends but to our country. It may be some consolation to you to know that your son died in the line of duty in a fight against a greatly superior force.

Admiral Sims wrote from London on May 14th:

MY DEAR MR. STURTEVANT:

In reply to your letter of April 15, 1919, addressed to Captain Twining, my Chief of Staff, I would say that all the personal effects of your son have been forwarded to you in Washington.

Although I have sent you several letters received from the British authorities expressing their sympathy at the loss of your son, I cannot close without renewed expression of my feeling in the death of this gallant young officer. His loss was a real blow to the Naval Service, but the manner in which he met his end



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

will remain an inspiration to all of us and is of material assistance in pointing the way to achieve ultimate victory.

There was, indeed, consolation and pride commingled with sorrow in the manifold tributes of admiration and affection received by the father of Albert Sturtevant. One of them came from the White House.

*4 March, 1918*

MY DEAR MR. STURTEVANT:

May I not extend to you an expression of my heartfelt sympathy in the death of your son? It was a death in the field of honor assuredly and there must be great pride in your heart that that should be the case, but that does not alter the fact that you have lost a beloved son and my heart goes out to you in genuine sympathy.

Cordially and sincerely yours  
WOODROW WILSON

The Secretary of the Navy hastened to express his sympathy, and his pride withal, in these words:

*27 February*

MY DEAR MR. STURTEVANT:

I was very deeply distressed to learn of the death of your son, Ensign A. D. Sturtevant, and am writing to express to you my deep sympathy. I do not know that there is anything I can say which will make your loss easier to bear, but it must be a source of comfort to you to feel that your son has shown that fine spirit of devotion to duty which disregards all thought of personal danger, and that he was ready to sacrifice his splendid young life in the great cause in which we are all enlisted. Such a spirit is the pride of the Nation, and your son has set an example which will inspire all of our young aviators to fight to the end and to sacrifice everything to bring about a lasting peace. The Navy is proud to have had your son in its service and to count him among its heroes.

With real sympathy, I am

Sincerely yours  
JOSEPHUS DANIELS

Many other letters were, of course, received in praise and honor of Albert Sturtevant. Two of these are suffi-

## CAPTAIN CHRISTIANSEN'S OWN STORY

cient to illumine his career at school and college where, after all, the tests are thorough and the scrutiny severe, Alfred E. Stearns, Principal of Phillips Andover Academy, found it in his heart to say:

MY DEAR MR. STURTEVANT:

We are receiving daily reminders of what this great conflict in behalf of human rights must cost us. Eleven names already make up the Phillips Academy honor list of old Andover boys who have given their lives for their country and the great cause; and our pride in them cannot be expressed adequately in words.

My sympathy goes out to you in fullest measure in your great bereavement. And yet I know that your sorrow will be tempered and your burden lightened by the knowledge that Albert died as you would have had him, gloriously and worthy of his best traditions and of your highest hopes. I could ask no greater privilege for my own boy than to die like that. And if age did not debar me I could ask for myself nothing better. May the thought of confidence well justified, and the memory of a life nobly lived and death courageously faced and through worthy sacrifice triumphantly overcome, prove a source of unending comfort and inspiration to you in these cloudy days. Lives such as Albert's cannot have been lived in vain.

President Arthur T. Hadley of Yale University wrote:

MY DEAR MR. STURTEVANT:

Your letter comes just as I was starting to write you and touches me more than I can possibly tell. I admired him greatly when he was here and did so splendidly on the crew. Morris saw much of him then, and I am glad to know that he was able to be of any service to him in the Harvard Law School. I feel sure that whatever things he may have done were magnified in your son's friendly eyes; but whatever they were I am glad that he did them.

At Yale Alumni Day your son's heroism was made the theme of more than one speech, and you may be sure that many a Yale boy is being inspired by the example of Al Sturtevant to do his best for his country and give if needs be the 'last full measure of devotion.'

I only wish I could say half of what I feel. If the time comes

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

when I can do anything for you, however slight, please let me know.

Mr. Sturtevant was a brave and patriotic father who bore unflinchingly the cruel destiny of war, but he could not feel reconciled unless he knew how Albert had met his death and what had befallen him in his last shrouded moments. The Navy Department could give him nothing more than the meagre facts already stated. He therefore addressed himself to the British Admiralty, through the London office of Admiral Sims, and received a letter from Lieutenant Commander Ramsey, U.S.N., dated April 29th, 1919.

MY DEAR SIR:

Your letter of February 28, 1919, addressed to Admiral Sims has been turned over to me for action. I sincerely regret that so much time has elapsed since its receipt before sending you a reply. This has been occasioned by the great difficulties experienced in getting details from the British with whom your son was operating when the machine in which he was flying was shot down in the North Sea.

I have to-day been the recipient of a letter from Colonel Porte of the Royal Air Force, enclosing a document signed by a Captain Bailey which I trust will give you the details which you desire.

I have taken a real personal interest in getting this information because I knew your son and admired him intensely and was terribly shocked to hear of his death. All the officers both of our own Naval Aviation Service and the British Air Service, with whom he was associated, have never failed to speak of him in the highest terms, and I assure you, Sir, that his loss has been deeply felt by Naval Aviation.

The closure referred to in the foregoing letter was this:

R.A.F. STATION, FELIXSTOWE  
28 April, 1919

To Colonel Porte,

Headquarters, Experimental Station, Felixstowe.

With reference to the enquiry on Ensign Sturtevant, U.S.N.A.S., attached to R.N.A.S.

## CAPTAIN CHRISTIANSEN'S OWN STORY

Ensign Sturtevant was 2nd pilot to Flt. Lt. Purdy on machine No. 4338 which left Felixstowe Air Station at 8:25 A.M. on Feb. 15, 1918, to escort the Dutch traffic to Holland.

On sighting Dutch traffic at 9:55 A.M. 55 miles E. by S. of Felixstowe, machine 4338 and the accompanying machine 4339 were attacked by a formation of nine hostile German seaplanes. Four hostile machines were seen to attack and surround Ensign Sturtevant's machine, which had changed her course on sighting the enemy and was steering a south-westerly course. The other machine was at the same time attacked by the five other hostile machines which he was able to keep at bay. The last seen of Ensign Sturtevant's machine was 1½ miles to the S.W. of the accompanying machine steering west about five minutes after the commencement of the action, and she disappeared into the mist. From a German report several days later this machine was brought down in flames in the South Downs.

C. W. BAILEY, CAPTAIN

This was so unsatisfactory, so wholly barren of results, that Mr. Sturtevant made one more attempt to enlist the aid of the Bureau of Navigation. To the request Rear Admiral Thomas Washington, Chief of the Bureau, replied on May 21st, 1920:

SUBJECT: STURTEVANT, Albert D., Ensign (deceased), U.S.N.R.F.  
SIR:

In reply to your communication of May 4, 1920, you are advised that a careful search of the files of the Department shows no report from the British or German Admiralty such as you suggest. It is thought possible, however, that the files of the Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Operating in European Waters may contain a more complete report of the death of your son and your communication has, therefore, been referred to that office and upon receipt of reply you will be further informed.

In reply to your fourth paragraph, the Bureau would be pleased to receive a copy of such data as may have been collected by you for, as stated, it will undoubtedly be of historical value in the future.

Mr. Sturtevant was reluctant to abandon the quest, although there seemed to be no more clues to follow. He

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

had felt confident that the German official records might enlighten him, but these had been inaccessible during the war. And even after the Armistice it seemed unlikely that any response could be obtained in the disorganized condition of the governmental bureaus at Berlin and the sullen attitude of defeat. In fact, Admiral Sims regarded the idea as futile and so expressed himself.

Mr. Sturtevant, however, combined unflagging persistence with valuable personal connections in Germany. As a patent attorney of prominence, with many correspondents abroad, he had been in touch with certain German manufacturing firms before the war and, after the Armistice, he was able to enlist the interest and sympathy of a certain Herr Direktor Fr. Wever of the Union Spezial-Maschinenfabrik of Stuttgart. It was known that the German planes engaged had been led by Captain Christiansen who was in command of the naval air forces at Zeebrugge.

It was Mr. Sturtevant's difficult task, therefore, to get into communication with Captain Christiansen himself and persuade him to make the statement desired. This was accomplished through the agency of Mr. Fritz Wever of Stuttgart, who addressed a letter of inquiry to the German Admiralty and was a man of sufficient influence to evoke the following reply:

### THE CHIEF OF THE ADMIRALTY

BERLIN, *Nov. 15, 1919*

In response to your letter of November 6, 1919, to the German Naval Board, you are advised that, in accordance with your wishes, inquiry has been made regarding the death of the American aviator Albert Sturtevant, as well as the address of Lieutenant Christiansen.

Since investigation is rendered difficult by reason of the demobilization of the Flying corps, we will ask that you be patient for a time.



## CAPTAIN CHRISTIANSEN'S OWN STORY

On conclusion of our inquiry you will be notified thereof at once.

(Signed) FABER

To Mr. Fr. Wever, Director  
Union Spezial-Maschinen-  
fabrik, Stuttgart.

A few days later the following information was courteously forwarded to Mr. Wever from the office of the Chief of the German Admiralty:

BERLIN, Nov. 23, 1919

Supplementary to the Admiralty letter No. Lu I 10038, November 15, 1919, the following information, taken from the official records, is sent you:

At 10:45, at Nord Hinder, a convoy consisting of 11 steam merchantmen and several torpedo boats was sighted on the ESE course. The convoy was protected by two Curtiss boats which, on sighting our aerial fleet, immediately turned off on the NW course. The southerly flying boat was engaged about 11 o'clock at 200 meters, and after brief resistance fell in flames. Hereupon the chief of the aerial fleet alone followed the second flying boat, the remainder of the aerial fleet not being able to accompany and being compelled to turn back by reason of lack of benzine. This Curtiss boat was fired on only at long range. The chase was abandoned in front of Lowestoft. At about 5 o'clock, at Nord Hinder, the wreckage of the Curtiss boat which was shot down, with 3 survivors, was found. On account of the heavy sea, however, our aerial fleet could not land.

(signed) CHRISTIANSEN

The home address of Kapitanleutnant F. R. Christiansen is: Junien, Holstein.

(Signed) FABER

Captain Christiansen was also punctiliously obliging in furnishing the information desired. On December 26, 1919, he wrote from the town of Junien, Holstein:

Director, Fr. Wever, Stuttgart,

After my return from abroad I received your lines of December 8th.

The report signed by me and sent to the Admiralty agrees with my war diary. It relates to an engagement with two double-motored Curtiss boats with English insignia, so-called U-boat chasers. My squadron consisted of three ordinary sea planes, and the attack took place about 75 kilometers from the Belgian

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

coast, near a lightship, Nord Hinder. During the course of the engagement one of the boats was quickly shot down in flames, while the other tried to escape by flight. The latter was pursued by me close to the English coast and fired at, definite result thereof not being learned.

After further reconnoitering in the afternoon of the same day the wreckage of the boat which had been shot down was sighted. Three men stood on this wreckage. As the sea was running high it was impossible to rescue them, as our own machines would have been damaged. Moreover, three English destroyers were not far distant, so that I took it for granted that they would take their comrades with them. Any other time we have always attempted to take fallen enemies prisoners, although with our small machines this was dangerous work. In that manner I myself have saved thirteen men, although our own aviators have been shot and killed when lying on the water without consideration. In the present case bad weather prevented our rescue work.

Yours

CAPT. FR. CHRISTIANSEN

Explicit as was this letter, it conveyed to Mr. Sturtevant a harrowing uncertainty, a poignant picture that haunted him. Three men had been seen alive. They were standing on the wreckage of the British flying-boat which was sighted after 'further reconnoitering' in the afternoon of that same day. This meant that they survived for several hours, at least. And how much longer nobody knows. We have Captain Christiansen's word for it that 'as the sea was running high it was impossible to rescue them, as our own machines would have been damaged. Moreover, three English destroyers were not far distant, so that I took it for granted that they would take their comrades with them.'

You can believe as much of this as you like. The German flight commander was a man of excellent reputation for courage and sportsmanship. He shows the racial bias and his hatred for England when he goes on to say that he had saved thirteen fallen foemen, 'although our own aviators

## CAPTAIN CHRISTIANSEN'S OWN STORY

have been shot and killed while lying on the water, without consideration.' Over against his professed chivalry must be placed the murder of many merchant seamen in open boats by order of the officers of German submarines. It is not easy to arrive at a conclusive verdict in this instance of the wrecked machine from Felixstowe. In Captain Christiansen's favor is the attitude of mutual respect that existed between the flying corps of the German and the Allied services as exemplified in the honors accorded aviators brought down in combat.

It was inevitable that Mr. Sturtevant should write to ask of Captain Christiansen whether it had been possible to recall any personal description of the three men clinging to the wrecked flying-boat. These and other questions were forwarded in a letter of February 14, 1920.

MY DEAR MR. WEVER:

I want to thank you for all the trouble you have been to in connection with the matter, and in view of our long friendship, I am taking advantage of it to ask you to communicate with Captain Christiansen again and try and get some additional information.

Captain Christiansen says in his letter that the report signed by him and sent to the Admiralty agrees with his war diary, but there are some points which I would like to have cleared up, and I am taking the liberty of asking you to communicate with him again and am putting some questions in my letter which I would like to have answered by Captain Christiansen if he feels that he can do so. I am sorry to put you to so much trouble in the way of translating into German all of this English, but I don't know any one here who could do the translating as well, to whom I wish to confide the matter and whom I know would be apt to understand as well as you exactly what I desire.

If you think it advisable, I authorize you to employ some competent person to go to Junien and interview Captain Christiansen so as to get the full data desired by me. I imagine this could be done at an expense of a couple thousand marks or so, and I would be glad to incur that if you think best results could be obtained thereby.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

In the first place, I want to preface my request for information from Captain Christiansen by stating that I do not expect him to answer any questions which he feels he ought not to on account of his duties as an officer, and I do not want him to consider any of my questions as impertinent. I am only trying to get from him such information as I think his father would have liked to get from my son if the conditions had been reversed. Furthermore, all the British and American officers in the Flying Corps with whom I have talked have spoken of Captain Christiansen as being a fair and square officer although an enemy.

The report of the British Admiralty, of which I have a copy, after stating the facts that the two English flying boats, 4338 and 4339, left Felixstowe at 8:45 on the morning of February 15, 1918, to convoy a fleet of merchantmen and torpedo boats to Holland, and while hovering around waiting for the convoy, were about 10 o'clock attacked by a squadron of German seaplanes, some eight or nine in number, and that the two British boats separated. One succeeded in beating off that portion of the German squadron which had attacked it, while the other was pursued by the other boats of the German squadron. The English officer who returned on the escaping boat reported that when his companion boat was last seen it was being pursued by all of the German squadron and disappeared in the mist.

A later personal report, given me by a British officer who visited this country, stated that he had heard from a German prisoner that the flying boat of which my son was pilot was not brought down by the German machines which had originally attacked it, but by lighter, faster machines under the command of Captain Christiansen.

I would like very much to have Captain Christiansen's statement as to the above reports and would like to have him answer also the following questions:

1. Was he, Captain Christiansen, in command of the German squadron of planes which originally sighted and attacked the two British boats;
2. If not, did he with his squadron of three planes, lighter, faster machines, join in the contest later and bring down the British boat;
3. Was he, Captain Christiansen, the chief of the Aerial Fleet (Fuhrerflugzeug), which, as stated in the Admiralty report alone, followed the second flying boat?



## CAPTAIN CHRISTIANSEN'S OWN STORY

You will understand that I am endeavoring to get at the facts of the matter with the idea only of satisfying myself and my family as to just what happened. You will see that in a way the statements contained in the letter of Captain Christiansen and in the Admiralty report are not exactly in accord. The German Admiralty report speaks of an 'aerial fleet,' and that the Chief of the aerial fleet alone followed the second flying boat, while the others were not able to accompany but turned back by reason of the lack of benzine. Captain Christiansen speaks of his squadron as being composed of three ordinary seaplanes, which I should think would hardly be a *fleet* in the ordinary acceptance of the term. Furthermore, the British report as set forth on the authority of the commander of the British boat which escaped and on the authority of officers of the convoy, and according to the statement made to me by the British officer above referred to, seemed to establish the fact that there really were some nine or ten German seaplanes waiting out in the mists for these two boats, and that when these two boats separated, the German fleet divided, attacking the two, one section following the escaping British boat some distance, and then returning and joining in the fight on the other boat. The report of the German Admiralty would seem to indicate that the boat which was brought down was first engaged, and that then the commander of the enemy fleet turned to pursue the other boat. This also does not seem to bear out the statements made by the officers with whom I talked and the British Admiralty report that the actual machines which brought down the boat of which my son was pilot were not present at the beginning of the battle which ensued but came in later and destroyed that boat.

If Captain Christiansen can clear up this matter by a full account from his diary and from his recollection, I would appreciate it very much if you would have him do so. Furthermore, I understand that the German magazine 'Motor' published some two or three months thereafter contained a picture of the machine which was destroyed, taken from one of the attacking boats. I would like very much to be informed just what is the correct story of this matter so that I may file the information away with my papers to be handed down to my youngest boy, now eleven years old.

While I suppose it will be impossible for Captain Christiansen to be able in any way to identify any of the three survivors



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

standing on the wreckage to which he refers in his letter of December 26th, perhaps he would be able to say whether in his opinion one of them was an American and not a British officer. Furthermore, my son was of very powerful athletic mould, standing six feet, two inches in his stocking feet, and weighing about one hundred and seventy-five pounds. He may or may not have been one of the three survivors on the wreckage, because there were four men who formed the crew of the boat; my son, who was one pilot, an Englishman, who was the other pilot, and two other men, so apparently when Captain Christiansen saw the wreckage with the three survivors, one of them was already gone.

From Captain Christiansen's familiarity with the Belgian coast and the waters near the same, I would like to know if he can inform me just about how far from the Belgian coast this wreckage lay and about opposite what point, for it may possibly be that my son's body was washed ashore, and I may be able by inquiry among the villagers along the Belgian coast to ascertain whether a body bearing his identification disc was washed ashore and buried at some point.

If you can transmit this letter with translation to Captain Christiansen, I would much appreciate it, if you will do so, or if it is easier get the substance of it and restate it to him so that he can, if he is willing, fill out a little more in detail the information furnished on the points which I desire.

This letter, when translated and sent to Captain Christiansen, was answered by him without much delay. He added little to the information previously obtained from him, but was at pains to refer to Mr. Sturtevant's queries in detail. He wrote, on April 2d:

MR. FRITZ WEVER, STUTTGART:

Your esteemed letter of March 10th, with enclosure, reached me a few days ago, after my return from a short trip abroad.

After consulting my records I can add nothing further to the statement I have already made with respect to the combat of Feb. 15, 1918.

I am not astonished at the report of the British Admiralty, which were always colored according to circumstances. A prior report gave the information that a British squadron had de-

## CAPTAIN CHRISTIANSEN'S OWN STORY

stroyed all the planes of my squadron except one, which was damaged; as a matter of fact I never lost one through British planes. The statement that there were eight or nine German planes in the engagement mentioned is not correct. Our forces consisted of my scouting squadron, as stated in the reports of our Admiralty.

We started at 10 A.M. from Zeebrugge, the engagement having taken place at about 10.50 A.M. in the neighborhood of Nord Hinder lightship, its war position being about forty English nautical miles halfway northward of Zeebrugge. The two hydroplanes, flying close together, were attacked simultaneously; one, however, appeared to be rather faster than the other. The encounter with one of the boats lasted about five minutes, until its destruction. I followed the second for about twenty minutes at a distance of about 1000 meters, when my companions were compelled to abandon the chase on account of shortage of gasoline. My plane, however, was not speedy enough to force a decisive engagement before the boat reached the English coast.

The photograph in the journal *Motor*, published September-October 1918, was taken in another encounter, July 21, 1918, near Lowestoft, England. No exposures (pictures) were made on Feb. 15, 1918.

It is impossible for me to give details of the condition of the personnel of the fallen hydroplane.

Comparatively few bodies were washed up on the Belgian coast during the war. Some of my comrades of the air, U-boat, and torpedo service were washed up on the Holland shore between Helder and Emuiden and lie buried in a small cemetery on the dunes, the name of which I do not recollect.

It will give me pleasure if this information will be of service to you.

Very truly yours

KAPT. FR. CHRISTIANSEN

It will be noted that the German flight commander's version fails to tally, in important respects, with the reports of the U.S. Navy Department and the British Admiralty. This, perhaps, was to be expected. And yet the contradictions are startling. The information transmitted from Felixstowe of necessity consisted of what the two

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

escaping pilots, Faux and Bailey, brought in. These and their two enlisted men were the British witnesses concerned in the fight. They were in positive agreement that the attack had been launched by nine or ten planes. Captain Christiansen is just as positive in asserting that his force numbered no more than 'three ordinary seaplanes.' What is more, he says that he alone pursued Faux's fugitive machine for twenty minutes toward the English coast when his companions were compelled to curtail their flight on account of shortage of gasoline. This was *after* Sturtevant and Purdy had been shot down, or so the statement would lead one to infer.

If this is true, the lost flying-boat had a fair chance to win out until the rapid retreat of Faux left it to withstand the concentrated attack of two or possibly three of the German planes. It is entirely a question of credibility, nor can it be satisfactorily solved. There is one aspect of it that may throw a little light in a dark corner. It may have seemed to you, as it did to me, that to accuse Faux of cowardice and thus unofficially to disgrace him, was harder punishment than he deserved if he actually found himself in a *mêlée* with as many as ten enemy seaplanes. He could not help his comrades in the other machine, for, according to his story, five of the hostile force were driving it toward the Belgian coast and five others were attacking him. Sturtevant and Purdy were hopelessly cut off and involved. For Faux to fight his own battle and save the lives of his crew and a valuable machine was a course not altogether liable to military censure.

This inconsistency becomes less apparent if one is willing to admit that Captain Christiansen is not an unmitigated liar. For the sake of argument, let us give him the benefit of the doubt. The war is over. We know that not every German was a scoundrel, a ravisher, and a murderer. If Captain Christiansen took only three planes out for that

## CAPTAIN CHRISTIANSEN'S OWN STORY

North Sea scouting trip, then possibly the British Admiralty found some reason to suspect that Faux's story was exaggerated, that he had seen more planes than there really were. In that event, it would be easier to understand why he was saved from formal punishment by questions of expediency and why so little information could be obtained by the United States Navy Department and by Mr. Sturtevant.

There is no blur or tarnish on the bright name and memory of Ensign Albert Dillon Sturtevant, first to die of the First Yale Unit. He was not one to write long letters nor did he have much to say in them about his work. The concluding sentences of one of his letters home contains the essence of his intense loyalty to the cause for which he gave his life. It is the epitaph of a young warrior:

If I ever get so I am not able to fly any more, I certainly am going to join the infantry. I'd be almost ashamed to go back home and have to say that I had never served in the trenches.

On November 11, 1920, Mr. Sturtevant accepted the following award of honor in behalf of the son who had 'gone west.'

SIR:

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting to you the NAVY CROSS awarded posthumously to your son, the late

ENSIGN ALBERT D. STURTEVANT, U.S.N.R.F.  
for services during the World War as set forth in the following:

### CITATION

For distinguished and heroic service as an aviator attached to the Royal Air Force Station at Felixstowe, England, making a great many offensive patrol flights over the North Sea and was shot down when engaged gallantly in combat with a number of enemy planes.

For the President,

JOSEPHUS DANIELS  
*Secretary of the Navy*

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The *Philadelphia Record* of July 30, 1920, contained the following account of a ceremony which added a new and dauntless vessel to the naval forces of the United States:

The United States torpedo boat destroyer Sturtevant, named for the late Ensign Albert D. Sturtevant, the first American naval aviator to be killed during the world war, was launched 99½ per cent. completed yesterday afternoon at the New York shipyard, Camden. The launching was attended by the father and several relatives of the late ensign.

The father is Charles I. Sturtevant, a Washington lawyer, and he was accompanied by his daughter, Mrs. Curtis Ripley Smith, of St. Albans, Vt., who christened the destroyer with champagne. Others in the party were Mr. Smith, William N. Sturtevant, a Yale student, who was an army aviator during the war; Charles I. Sturtevant, Jr., a brother of the dead ensign; Miss Anita Henry, of Washington; Miss S. E. Thompson, of Paris, and F. G. Lawrence, who was with the Yale Unit in the aviation service.

The ensign whom the destroyer was named after went to France with the Yale unit of 28 men.

Rear Admiral R. F. Hall and Mrs. Reynold T. Hall, president of the Society of Sponsors of the United States Navy; Lieutenant Commanders Bruce and Bastidio and their wives and other naval attachés were present and greeted the relatives along with Senior Vice President H. A. Magoun, Junior Vice President William G. Grossbeck and other shipyard officials.

The destroyer when it entered the water was equipped with all of its machinery, four smokestacks and wireless apparatus, and will be ready for its trial trip in a few days. It is the first destroyer to be launched on the Delaware River so nearly completed. It is 314 feet 4 inches in length and has a beam of 30 feet 11 inches and depth of 9 feet 4 inches and will make 35 knots per hour and burn oil for fuel.



## CHAPTER XXXVI

### GOSPORT AND SCOTLAND

To the young men of the Unit impatient to take an active part in a war which they knew only by hearsay, the time must have dragged interminably while they went the rounds of one instruction school after another. Here, for instance, were Dave Ingalls and 'Ken' MacLeish, in the winter of 1917-18, ordered to learn more about flying at Gosport in the south of England and then north among the bleak hills of Scotland. They went cheerfully because it appeared to be the last stage on the road to the fighting front. Dunkirk was the goal of their aspirations and they had been told that they were to go there after the course of advanced lessons in flying land machines.

Gosport turned out to be well worth while. They conceived a high regard for its methods and results. For the first time they had glimpses of what the swift and deadly fighting in the air was like. Ingalls called it wonderful to watch the flying of some veteran pilot, returned to Gosport as an instructor after a year or two with the combat forces. The enthusiastic Dave went on to say:

The school was started as an experiment in a new system of instruction which was so successful that it was adopted at all the other British training stations. It was very intensive, the best men picked as teachers, three to each flight, about three pupils in a class, and plenty of machines. I was first sent up in an A. V. Roe, a light two-seater with a rotary motor. A few tricks about flying and landing were taught me in one or two flights and then I soloed. One was shown a few things and then he practiced by himself, then more new kinks to learn and he tried them out until he was most thoroughly drilled and at his ease. And everything had to be perfectly done. Days were spent in polish-

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

ing off a simple vertical turn, and it was surprising to find how hard it was to do this precisely right.

Toward the end of the course we were put on scouts, Sopwiths and Camel, and in these we were worked in the same painstaking way, with long cross-country flights of a hundred miles or so. The crowd consisted of men much older than we were, and the life was very pleasant. The machines were always ready and in perfect condition. You started off and flew until you felt tired when you came back for lunch and rest before another hop.

There were no flying rules. The independence of it made flying delightful — machines landing and taking off with no regard for the wind direction, others looping and zooming about the hangars, others engaged in mock battles, others practicing forced landings. It seemed free and easy and yet the very complexity of it kept one always on the alert and there were almost no accidents. No one could feel bored. You were never kept waiting for a machine and you were not urged to fly unless you wished. If you didn't wish, you were soon fired out. It was no place for an unambitious man.

This was far more to Dave Ingalls' liking than the slower, clumsier seaplanes. He had found his natural bent, his medium of expression as a flier. It was admirably fitting him for his brilliant exploits against the German airmen. His letters express a new zest, keen and boyish and buoyant. He had found the most splendid game to play in the world. In spirit he had begun to be akin to the greatest of French aces, a youngster like himself, of whom another Frenchman wrote with the pen of an artist:

One after another, the victorious birds came back to cover from every part of the violet and rosy sky. But joy over their success must show itself, and they indulged in all the fanciful caprioles of acrobatic aviation, spinning down in quick spirals, turning somersaults, looping or plunging in a glorious sky-dance. Last of all these young gods, Guynemer landed after one final circle, and took off his helmet, offering to the setting sun his illuminated face still full of the spirit of battle.

You will find these manifestations of sheer enjoyment

## GOSPORT AND SCOTLAND

and oblivion to danger in some of Dave Ingalls' letters from Gosport and Scotland.

(GOSPORT) *December 29, 1917*

DEAR DAD:

After leaving London Thursday morning, we were certainly glad to get here, although late as usual. On account of the holidays everything has been a little slack here, but Monday a new bunch of pupils came in and things will probably take a big brace. Just now we Americans are the only pupils, so we are getting some good work in.

Yesterday I got only one flight, a short one in the afternoon, with a young Englishman who is my instructor now. He is just a kid, but a very good flier. For some reason a young Englishman seems very much younger than an American of the same age.

There were heavy clouds at 2300 feet and it was rough as the deuce, with a strong wind of twenty-five miles per hour. After about ten minutes instructing, I at last got off alone. I've been dying to get up alone and certainly had a time. As there were a lot of machines around, I had to keep a good lookout, as it is surprising how quickly you come together. I climbed up to about 2000 feet, doing several vertical turns on the way up. Then I leveled out, got up some speed, pulled back the stick and looped for my first time.

It is customary to cut the motor at the top or a little beyond, but I cut too soon for the first two loops, but it made no difference. At the top, as I was doing some very tight loops, not knowing how much strain the machine would stand, centrifugal force did not quite hold me in, though I held myself there by a very tight grasp on the stick. Of course, I had a belt on, too, as a precaution, but it is not necessary. After about five or six of these, to get the hang of it, I tried rolling, which is sort of turning upside down and then right side up again while going somewhat straight ahead. It is awfully peculiar, and I couldn't seem to get the hang of it at first, but ended up in a tail-spin which is simply diving straight and revolving rapidly. This last is the most dangerous stunt, as the machine is almost entirely out of control. It is a great strain on the machine. Well, I would cut the motor and get out of this, usually not until I had dropped 600 or 700 feet, and kept trying until I got onto a fairly respectable roll. These machines being large and two-seaters, of course don't roll very well anyway.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Then I did a few tumbler air turns, getting into a tail-spin the first few times. It seems as if everything ends up in a tail-spin, if not done correctly. Following these I just mixed up stalls, tail-slided loops, etc. for a while, till I made myself pretty sick. In all I was out about 45 minutes and wasn't flying straight a quarter of a mile.

Well, as I say, I was getting cold and a bit sick, so I came down, tried a few landings and came in. It was the best flight I ever had, Dad, and I certainly enjoyed it.

(GOSPORT) *January 3, 1918*

DEAR DAD:

For the last three days I have been having lots of flying, and so also lots of fun. The first day was very cloudy but after getting up to about 3000 I was above the clouds in the sunlight and, Dad, it was by far the most beautiful sight I have ever seen. It was quite warm and the huge billows of clouds below covered the entire horizon, and seemed to offer a big feather bed to light on. The clouds were of course sort of uneven, tremendous mountains with valleys in between. Every now and then machines would sort of rise out of the clouds and the sun would gleam on the wings.

Yesterday was very clear and I learned a lot about vertical turns. These men come back from the front to this school, where flying is taught scientifically and perfectly and are absolutely overwhelmed by the amount they do not know. Practically no one who has not been here can make a perfect turn.

Today I had my first smash, fortunately a minor one. I was practising landings, the dam foolishness of myself is awful, small fields, cutting my motor as if it had quit on me, and picking a field and landing, when I caught seven or eight telephone wires. I had not seen them nor had any idea what I hit, but my ailerons failed to work so I kept on and landed, almost in a ditch. Well, after landing on the brink of said ditch I climbed out and found the control wire running to the bottom of the lower wing carried away, otherwise everything O.K. As I couldn't fix it I kicked myself around the field for about ten minutes when my flight commander, who had been told of a machine down, landed, left a mechanic, and took me home. Since then I have been having my leg pulled as the English say. Well, as you used to say when I smashed up an auto, it is a good thing so long as nobody is hurt,



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as you have the experience. I certainly will try to keep my eyes open.

But yesterday 'Shorty' Smith almost ended his career and taught us all a good lesson. He went out and on getting to about 2500 feet looped. The strap to hold you in the front seat had been left lying on the seat loosely fastened and when upside down with the stick pulled way back, the strap swung around and over the stick, holding it way back. This of course held the elevators up so the machine started on a second loop with 'Shorty' pushing for all he was worth. As he had cut the motor the machine merely pointed straight up stalled, tail-slipped, dove down, then started up again. Fortunately his ailerons and rudder would still work. After stalling, it would of course dive several hundred feet before gaining enough speed to pull him up again. After coming down by the above process to about one hundred feet 'Shorty' was a bit worried, but being a plucky little devil he didn't lose his head. Just as he started to go up to stall, here he saw he would, in the ensuing dive, hit the ground head on, so he cleverly side-slipped by using the ailerons and everything just happening to work out fortunately he pulled it out of the tail-slide a few feet before crashing and landed all right with only a wing slightly damaged.

He says he thought an awful lot on the way down, as it took quite some time, but he always had the hope of levelling off just as he hit. He says he didn't think of side slipping till he saw he'd lose out if he didn't do something when he levelled off at about 180 feet. He says his brain was in good condition then. That taught us to look out for anything that would catch the stick and proves that one has wonderful control in pretty adverse conditions. Even my being able to land trailing seven or eight telephone wires after a hard shock shows that it takes a hard bump to bust anything.

(GOSPORT) Jan. 14, 1918

DEAR DAD:

We negotiated the battle of London safely for the three days' leave we were afforded, staying at the American Officers Club, seeing shows and talking to the many very interesting officers, Army and Navy, who are always stopping there on their way to and from France and America.

Among others we saw Admiral Sims for a minute, and Capt. Cone, who, as you probably are aware, is at the head of naval aviation. The latter expressed a desire for our finishing up



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

quickly, from which I derived that the men who are to make up the flights that we are to command have almost completed their course of training at the U.S. Army aviation school for scout pilots in France. Although I fully appreciate the impossibility of it, I am sorry that they too could not have had the wonderful training which the English have so kindly given us. To be sure they have received the best instruction that the Navy could offer and I hope it is better than I have predicted.

According to a letter from 'Di,' who is executive officer at our future station, it is progressing as well as could be hoped for from the disadvantage of its location, — it is constantly bombed by aircraft, which occasionally breaks up the monotony of construction work.

Evidently the authorities here have also received orders to hurry us through, and I expect practically to live in a Camel this week, after which we will be immediately sent to Scotland for I imagine at least two weeks, probably three, training in gunnery and aerial fighting. From here we shall return to France with all the customary naval delay, and will probably spend several weeks waiting in Paris, and then perhaps longer for our men to study up on some technical point highly important practically, such as the use of a compass or something like that which has been sadly neglected.

Here the weather has been rotten. Wind, clouds, snow, and worst of all, fog. Any weather seems to bring on a heavy ground mist preventing flying. Today it did not clear up till afternoon very late and as by that time it was almost tea time, everyone was compelled to adjourn for that important event. However, we have all been given a private Camel, to fly our heads off, which is just what we all want.

The new allotment or class came in this afternoon — they change every two weeks. We feel like old timers now, just imagine me at tea explaining to an R.F.C. flight commander, who had spent two years at the front, how to work the type of motor used here and how to put one of these dual-machines into a tail-spin. This new bunch are a bit uneasy because this afternoon before flying became possible two of the best instructors went up and did the most wonderful flying imaginable. Even the old timers had to stand around in awe. You see if these men pass here well they are not sent back to the front immediately, but are given a much needed rest for a month's instructing — so they are pretty

## GOSPORT AND SCOTLAND

keen to do their best. By that time they are fed up and dying to get back to the front again and they are then in wonderful shape.

A great many, almost all in fact, of this class are Canadians, who I find are a great deal like Americans and have often spent a lot of time in the States, so one feels almost as if it were an American station.

(GOSPORT) *January 17, 1918*

DEAR DAD:

Although the weather has been rotten so far this week, yesterday was passable, and I had about an hour and a half. As we now each have a Camel to ourselves, if the weather permits we can fly as much as we want. Until yesterday afternoon I had not become accustomed to the way the Camel handled, as it is a long step from an Avro, the slow dual control machines, to a scout, especially a Camel, as it is about the trickiest and hardest to fly. What helped more than anything else to make me accustomed to the machine was that late in the afternoon as I was fooling around, looping etc., an instructor also in a Camel suddenly appeared diving at me, and for about ten minutes we chased each other around. It was the most enjoyable and exciting time I have ever had. One forgets about simply flying and does so instinctively, keeping one's eye always on the other fellow, and also a general lookout for other machines. It is really remarkable how close two machines can come together without colliding.

Another funny thing, 'Shorty' had just been up before in the same Camel — it is painted a peculiar color, and we had fooled around together, quite a bit apart however. Well at first I thought this must be 'Shorty' again, but in about a second I saw I was wrong for from quite a distance, the difference in the two men's flying ability became quite apparent. To tell the truth whereas 'Shorty' and I had each lots of fear of colliding, when this fellow came around I never thought about it. He had perfect control and I just never thought of running into him. It seemed to me that the danger of collision is when two machines are just fooling around, thinking themselves alone.

Well, as I have said, from this little encounter I got lots of confidence and for the rest of the afternoon felt perfectly at home. The machine handles so lightly that anything can be done and it is so easy that you simply couldn't fly straight if you wanted to. But very foolishly I did a lot, six or seven, tail-spins

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

just before coming in and as the darned little machine spins at a terrible rate I felt rotten for two or three hours afterward. Also I have broken all speed records that I've made before, as several times on looking at the air speed indicator in a dive it would be registering 190 or more. If the weather doesn't improve we'll be here another week. Suits me all right.

(GOSPORT) *January 24, 1918*

DEAR DAD:

YOU certainly must be busy now and I don't suppose you are home very much. It's lucky that Mother is so deeply interested in and hard at work for the Red Cross. I'll be nineteen now, in a few days, and hope to celebrate my birthday in London, as I think we shall leave this school Saturday the 26th and go to Scotland, passing through London. As is customary when traveling under our good navy's orders, we shall probably be delayed in London for several days. This will not be so bad, however, as there is usually plenty to do there.

The two schools, gunnery and aerial fighting, will probably not be quite so comfortable and easy going as is this one. As far as I can find out now, a week at each place suffices for the course, so we'll not be there long unless the weather is dud. Yesterday was not very good here. The morning which was fine was occupied mostly by gunnery practice. I had one thirty-five minute flight in my Camel and a good scrap with 'Ken.' Somehow or other I unfortunately broke the rudder bar — on which one's feet rest, and also as the motor is in bad shape and is being overhauled, my Camel has been laid up since.

The afternoon was dud. An awful fog came up very suddenly and one fellow trying to get down landed in a tree, while another lit at the foot of a tremendous wireless mast, and another crashed into the flag pole of one of the hangars. Fortunately no one was hurt. As it cleared a bit I went up in one of the Avros to test the motor, a two place machine, but the clouds were at about 150 feet. Every one is getting a bit frisky lately, flying around the field and landing very close. It's very hard to get in, about five machines are continually landing within about fifty feet of the hangars. At the end of each class everyone seems to show off a bit, at this time more than usual. But today was fine, and I flew an Avro most of the morning and afternoon, getting only one ride in a Camel I borrowed from another flight. I did some

## GOSPORT AND SCOTLAND

so-called contour-chasing, i.e., flying very low, jumping over buildings, trees, etc. It's great fun unless the motor stops, when you are 'up the Creek.'

So ho for London and Scotland.

(GOSPORT) *Jan. 27, 1918*

DEAR MOTHER:

In spite of everything portending otherwise we are still here at R.F.C. Gosport and hope to remain next week. As this week end was leave week, there was practically no flying Saturday and Sunday, but we stayed here anyway. You see Friday night there was a dance here which the officers gave. It was great fun, though English girls have a most unusual way of dancing. So Saturday morning we slept until lunch and so couldn't go to London.

Friday afternoon 'Shorty,' 'Ken' and I each taking an Avro and 'Ken' and I mechanics for passengers, we set out on a cross country fly to a camp about forty miles from here. Well it was awfully foggy and we ought not to have gone as results showed. We flew over almost all the way together, but just over a city we were flying about four hundred feet to keep below the clouds and see where we were going, 'Shorty,' who was supposed to be leading, went up into a cloud and we never saw him again. I started to follow and lost sight of 'Ken,' so I turned over to the coast and came down to about one hundred feet. Seeing nothing of either of them and being lost I picked out what looked like a good field beyond the city, and landed. The minute we touched we stopped as the field turned out to be muddy and watery. We both got out and looked things over. It looked bad.

While we debated, men, women and children collected panting around us, touching the mechanic and asking if we needed an ambulance. As the mechanic is a husk of a fellow about six feet two inches I don't know why we looked like ambulance patients. When a suitable gallery had arrived I got in and the mechanic swung the propeller and together with motor and about one hundred people pushing and apparently endeavoring to tear off the wings as souvenirs we got to a knoll about fifteen feet square. The mechanic got aboard and starting at one side of the knoll we managed to get started so by the time we hit the mud we were almost flying. There was then an anxious second and we were off, missing surrounding people, trees and wires equally closely.



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

As the fog kept getting lower we had to fly over the city very low and even then could only see a little way, just far enough to miss by inches a couple of tremendous smokestacks that suddenly loomed up ahead. When we finally got back 'Shorty' had not returned, but telephoned later that he had landed and would come back next day. He got in yesterday afternoon and said he had stayed with a very congenial English family and had a fine time. We were pretty suspicious and pumped him till we found out that the family included a wonderful daughter. Every one has been kidding him since.

SCHOOL OF SPECIAL FLYING (GOSPORT)

*February 1, 1918*

MY DEAR MOTHER:

The last two days here have been most enjoyable. Although there has been a slight fog, we've done a great deal of flying.

Yesterday morning I had two hops in an Avro, one with my C.O. Captain Clocte, in which I learned a new trick. It seems as though there was no end to the amount of different things one can learn. This was a vertical spiral. That is, with the motor off, we glided down, and banked up vertically in a spiral. Although it is really very simple, it is the first time I have ever done it or seen it done, and Clocte tells me he has just learned it himself.

In the afternoon I was up for a long time in my Camel, which is running wonderfully, and after a short scrap with 'Shorty,' in which I had a comfortable time, being always at his tail — an enviable position, owing to my motor being better than his — I tried for the first time flying upside down. Of course, the motor does not run, so one simply glides down slowly on one's back. Of all the uncomfortable positions it is the worst. In the first place, the machine tends to slip off on one wing and eventually always does, about two minutes being the extent of my flight upside down. That is, the machine is very hard to keep level; one wing tends to go down, the other up. And as all controls are reversed it is most awkward.

Then after a perfect tea (really I intend to institute tea hereafter wherever I live), 'Ken' arrived from London. As I wrote, he had been unable to get away on his Camel on account of the heavy fog, so he came out in the train, and we expect to fly in tomorrow, he and 'Shorty' going in an Avro to bring back the Camel and also Lieutenant Edwards, who is the aide to stunts. Funny how everyone wants to loop, etc., isn't it? He also



## GOSPORT AND SCOTLAND

brought me a camera, so at least I can take some photographs, though of course, I'll not be able to send you any.

This morning I had two flights in my Camel, besides a lot of gunnery, and managed to stay upside down a little longer than yesterday. But I almost broke up my machine, when, as I was gliding in to land, the pressure in the gas tank leaked out and I couldn't pump it up as fast as it leaked. Well, I was trying to pump and land at the same time and came too close to the hangars, so, when I was still about ten feet off the ground, the hangars were in front. I put the switch on the gravity tank — a small auxiliary tank — and opened the valve, thinking I would go up around and land again. But the gravity tank is a fake; anyway the gas just leaked through enough to about keep the propeller turning. So I had to do a vertical bank with the motor sort of sputtering and turn with one wing almost dragging and lit at right angles. It was a rotten feeling, as I could feel it begin to side-slip down on account of the slow speed at which I was going, and I should undoubtedly have smashed a wing if everything had not gone just right. As it was I was well kidded. The gravity tank worked all right when I tested it out some time ago, but being little used, I suppose some dirt got in the pipes. Anyway, I took it out on the mechanics, with the result that this afternoon the old Camel was in fine form and 'Shorty' and I went with two of the instructors on a beautiful cross-country flight.

They knew the country well, so at good places we could road down low, giving the people and animals a great scare. It must have been very exciting to see four Camels tearing along just over the ground. As you probably know, the density of the air low down lets the machines go considerably faster than they do at any high altitude, so we moved right along. It was great fun jumping over hills, houses, etc. We have certainly had a wonderful time here, and I'm sure we will be sorry to leave, which will be now probably in two or three days, as we are just waiting to go to Scotland to finish up.

(TURNBURY) *February 7, 1918*

MY DEAR MOTHER:

Much to our regret we left the best school day before yesterday and took the train to London, where we spent the night. Then, leaving early yesterday morning, we traveled up into Scotland to this, the second school in our course. We had a fine trip and

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

crossed the frontier into Scotland hungry as the deuce, where beautiful Scotch girls rushed up to the train in the station and gave us cakes, etc. Don't know how they knew we were coming! From then on at every small station, and none were too small for our express to stop at, we could get out and have the time of our lives listening to any Scotchman whom we could prevail upon to talk. Their brogue is divine. Upon our arrival we were shown to rooms in a hotel which made me homesick for Palm Beach. And this morning we looked out upon a beautiful golf links by the sea, with beautiful hills rolling away inland. A really heavenly place, evidently a once famous golfing resort! I certainly have fallen for Scotland; it is a great place.

Here, instead of older men, captains, etc., as were at our previous school, there are only young inexperienced cadets, slews of them, as this is practically a non-flying course. We spent all day sitting on hard benches in sort of class rooms, studying twice as hard as I ever did at school. This will last at least two weeks, when we will take up aerial fighting for a couple of weeks. Then our training will be over.

*February 15, 1918*

MY DEAR MOTHER:

The weather up here in Scotland has been pretty rotten since our arrival. Today it is raining and cold. As this is the first day I have not been very busy, due to the fact that today we have our exams. in gunnery, which don't take long, the rain prevents our taking a walk.

Tomorrow we start a bit more interesting work — i.e. firing from aeroplanes, at different targets, from the air. On account of the bad weather I am going to take up the sport of bridge, as otherwise there will be nothing to do during our flying course. Of course they play a rotten game on a big pool table which they call billiards. I think it was invented some thousand years ago and compares to real billiards as a bow and arrow does to a machine gun. If any one asked me what England's national game was I'd say bridge. They play all the darned time, but as far as I can see it is not with the result that 'practice makes perfect.'

In spite of our excruciating labours we are having a fine time, at mess. 'Shorty' and I are at one end of a table with a South African who has been fighting since 1913, a Canadian who has been over in France for two years in infantry and a young

## GOSPORT AND SCOTLAND

Australian who, having just arrived at the age, enlisted in the R.F.C. They are a mighty good bunch. The Australian, who now looks about 17, received two white feathers before he enlisted. They must have handed them around to any fellow old enough to wear trousers.

The other day 'Shorty' and I walked about 3 or 4 miles to a beautiful little Scotch village along the coast, where we heard one might obtain matches. Believe me, matches are worth their weight in gold. Well, we were in luck and each of us obtained a box. That night after supper, everyone at our end of the table got out a cigarette and turned to 'Shorty,' who had pulled out his box. With great pride 'Shorty' opened the box and pulled out a match. The match comfortably rubbed against its neighbor, there was a flash and Shorty ruefully looked at about 150 burnt matches. There was really quite an universal sorrow. I'm surprised that no monument has been erected.

*Feb. 21, 1918*

DEAR DAD:

The last few days have been no vacation. We start at 8.45 finish at 12, start at 1.45 and stop for tea at about 4.45. Then there is a lecture from 5.30 to 6.45. After dinner we usually have to copy notes — thousands of them, but, by writing all Saturday afternoon, when we had a half-holiday, but it poured rain, I have finally finished. Although at first the course seemed very monotonous and boring, now I am enjoying it immensely as it is most interesting. Also there is always a certain amount of excitement, even to us, in the lists posted of the fellows, who are to go 'overseas' as they call it, immediately.

As it is a sort of large finishing school, fellows are continually coming in from different preliminary schools, and going out to France, home defense, etc. There are quite a few army and navy men of ours, besides of course the R.F.C. composed of a few English, a great number of Canadians, and some S. Africans, etc.

On our arrival we were split up and I am rooming with a very funny Irishman, who has had two years in the trenches. He is a mighty good fellow and we are in the same classes and have lots of competition on the ranges, shooting. I find that a machine gun is darn hard to shoot, not like playing a hose, and the gears which synchronize the propeller and bullets, and the sights for deflection, etc. are pretty complicated. To thoroughly understand them is, to me, who have had little to do with guns, like

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

putting a picture puzzle together. All the R.F.C. men have had a good deal of training at the preliminary schools, but we had only a little. However, we finish in about seven or eight days and then hope to go through the course in aerial fighting, which is very short.

It is quite different here from our first school where all the men were older, experienced men, while here they are just a bunch of kids. Just as at school, I often wonder how some sissy, simple, young pet ever left home. But, by George, they all come along, and do their best, just as, with no war, they would have gone to school and college. There is one Canadian here who used to play the violin at some hotel in New York, whom I remember having seen. He is very good and plays quite a bit here. He also plays the piano and knows most of the late pieces. It certainly is great to hear him.

MIDDLETON, AYR, *February 27, 1918*

DEAR DAD:

It seems like an awful long time since we have flown. What with the dud weather and the overcrowdedness of this school, the outlook is full of a distant future. Moreover, all of our men who were with us in France are here with us now and we are going to take the course together, so it will be some time before a big bunch like us will be able to start.

Yesterday an army aviator and I went to Glasgow to see what's what. We had a darn good time, saw an excellent show last night, and some good movies in the afternoon, but we had to get up this morning to catch a 5 A.M. train in order to get here in time.

Day before yesterday there was a lot of flying — for others. One poor nut started off with his motor missing badly because he was choking it. He kept on, however, and did a circle about the field, refusing to land while he had a chance. So just as he got over our heads the motor stopped completely and he came down on top of a hangar, the wheels caught and he stuck straight up with the bow embedded in the roof. It was the stupidest and funniest thing I ever saw. The poor nut climbed out and posed for everyone to make photos of him. As it was very cloudy I'm afraid I didn't get a good picture.

During this same period, Kenneth MacLeish was taking it more seriously, like a knight of the Crusades upon whose



## GOSPORT AND SCOTLAND

shield the sacred cross was emblazoned. If Ingalls flamed like a Guynemer, the soul of MacLeish glowed like that of a Rupert Brooke. In addition to this spiritual bestowal, he had the gifts of the fighting aviator as his brief career was to prove. The series of letters herewith quoted covers his experiences in England and Scotland, and en route, until he was ready to join the station at Dunkirk.

(MOUTCHIC) December 6, 1917

We move in a couple of days to finish the last link in the chain of preparation, and then we're off for the front. And we shall have the honor of being the first to see active service, which is only fitting as we were the first to enlist. But my flying education has been somewhat flighty in spots, and I sometimes have misgivings. However, I shall learn to shoot with a machine gun and shoot *straight*, and that's what counts, I presume. How they hit anything from an airplane will continue to be an unsolved mystery to me. Let's hope the mystery isn't solved at my expense — that wouldn't be so humorous. I used to laugh when I was in America, but since I've been in France I have laughed harder at one time and been lower at another than ever before. This strain seems to make one hit the highest and the lowest spots. After you pass the stage where you care a darn what happens to you, you take things easy and laugh — laugh at anything, laugh at nothing. The main thing is — you laugh. I've never felt so darn free and easy in my life. It is merely a question of adaptation, just as it is everywhere else. Of course there are occasional dark spots, when you wake up in a cold sweat and wonder what you'll do when a Boche gets the drop on you, and you get cold and lonely and 'nobody-loves-youish,' but they're short and after all you agree that guerre, or no guerre, *c'est la vie!*

'Di' has already gone to our station. He is not flying yet, however. I heard from him today, and he said the weather was so bad that there hadn't been any raids, but the night after he wrote I happen to know they got a frightful bombing. Poor devil! There's nothing under the sun more fiendish than one of those things. You can't see a thing, you can only hear a low whistling — it increases, you hear a dull *thud* and the ground trembles; then you see stars, and can't hear anything for about ten minutes. They're fierce! I don't wonder the Tommies hate



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

them worse than artillery. And to think that I'll have to be bombed about every night till the war's over. Cheerful, isn't it?

(GOSPORT) *December 17* <sup>1</sup>

Here I am back in Merry England again. It is surprising to realize how very busy I can feel with all this traveling and yet not accomplish one blessed thing. Tomorrow I shall be assigned to a flight, and work will really commence. Lord! I wish I could finish my work and get down to real action. I just got word today that two very dear friends of mine were killed in training at a school in France, and two days ago I heard that a pupil of mine got killed in the same machine in which I taught him to fly down near Bordeaux, and he was doing exactly what I had told him, every day, not to do. The war is quite a reality to me. I hope the people at home can say the same.

I have received several of the most wonderful letters from you recently. I dare say that no one could read them through and not stand straighter and set his jaw firmer and add to the youth's 'I can' a resolute 'I will.' If you feel as you do, I shall simply stop worrying about how badly you people at home will feel if anything happens to me and go at this thing with the best I have. It will be a long hard pull before I even begin selfless, but from now on it shall be my leading ideal. I say leading, because to my mind if one is truly selfless one will unconsciously have become what he wanted to be when he had all his other ideals before him. (Excuse the independent shift from 'one' to 'he,' but I had my own case in mind) I am not a bit blue about my future any more. You see, the men who will fly the bombing machines in our convoy are the dearest friends I have, and no sacrifice on my part could begin to show my fondness for them. No, I really look forward to it. The main thing with me is to get into action quickly. I can't see these English and French taking part in such a marvelous thing and not take part myself. It is just not in me. When I had a month more training to go through, I was terribly blue and unhappy. Now I may have about a week more and I think that when I finally get under way I will be happier than I have ever been before. Not quite as outwardly happy, perhaps, but I will have peace of heart, and that kind of happiness is *real*.

SCOTLAND, *February 24, 1918*

I hate to be unpatriotic to my ancestry, but this Scotch weather is fine for ducks and sea monsters only. I'm getting

## GOSPORT AND SCOTLAND

webbed feet myself. What do you think I did to celebrate Washington's Birthday? I took a bath! I luxuriated in the hot water for about an hour, and then started to scrub. After some time I unearthed some buttons, which, after more scrubbing, I found were attached to a suit of underwear. I excavated the underwear, as it were, and found it clear sailing from that layer to my skin. I felt so light after the bath that I almost exploded, but the worst of it is I caught a cold.

This is the last step before going overseas. It brings the whole thing very near to me when I say good-bye or rather 'Cheer ho' to five or six men every day. They are smiling, care-free, happy-go-luckies one minute, and next they are serious, determined men. It isn't hard or unusual to undergo the most violent metamorphoses under those circumstances. You never know clearly what is what, or what you may develop into tomorrow. I have found in my own little experience that such uncertainty and a life so full of miraculous changes and events tends to make me rather skeptical about the truth of everything. But after passing through a stage of it, feeling and living a sort of 'I don't care' recklessness, I've settled down and am assimilating gradually all the characteristics necessary to make me my old self, under entirely new conditions of life.

Of course there are sorrows and hardships connected with it all, which are far worse than any I have known before. I can best express myself by an event which took place recently. A boy named 'Al' Sturtevant and I were about as close friends as could be. We went to college together and trained together at Palm Beach and Huntington. We chanced to meet in London a short time ago. We had a perfectly wonderful time together, as only old pals can who have the same things to face and fight. We planned what we were going to do after the war, etc.

A few days ago I got a letter from 'Al.' He said he was now a second pilot with the Royal Naval Air Service and was going on fighting patrols in huge flying-boats with the English until a station was established to which he could be assigned. Between the time he wrote the letter and the time it got to me, he was shot down in flames by ten Hun machines. The Hun that shot him down is named Christiansen. He is one of the German aces. So it turned out that I got 'Al's' letter after he was killed. I shall never forget what a shock I received, and I shall never know just what changes I underwent, but I feel perfectly sure that I

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

shall never again experience such an awful shock. For a time I couldn't suppress the smile of the cynic. I couldn't help feeling, 'Oh, what's the use of having such marvelous friendships? I only feel worse when they're ended.' But I got over all that. You won't believe me when I tell you how. Anyway, I was sitting alone thinking how awful his death must have been and how I would miss never seeing him again, when I was impressed suddenly with the fact that 'Al' *hadn't* gone out of my life, that he still held the same warm spot in my heart, and still had the same influence over me. I am perfectly convinced now that 'Al,' as far as I am concerned, will always be the same fine friend that he used to be. And so I draw my conclusions: After all, the only truly *great* realities in life are the unseen realities.

LONDON, March 14, 1918

Well, I have finally received my orders, and tomorrow I go to the front, unless some extraordinary changes await me in Paris. Another very dear friend of mine was killed yesterday. Do you remember Curt Read, the boy I went down to Norfolk with? He and I were the two instructors down there the first month. He was killed at the station I am going to. I have heard that he crashed into a sea-wall.

I was so glad to get your point of view on after-life. I am so glad to have broken the ice, so to speak, as I didn't want to do it myself. Now, I think we can have a perfect understanding. In the first place, if I find it necessary to make the supreme sacrifice, always remember this: I am so firmly convinced that the ideals which I am going to fight for are right and splendid ideals that I am happy to be able to give so much for them. I could have no self-respect, I could not consider myself a man, if I saw these ideals defeated when it lies in my power to help defend them. No matter what my past reveals — I may have been cowardly, I may have been selfish and a poor, weak Christian — though I was a complete failure, I need not think of it now. It is one of the finest, most inspiring miracles in the world, to be able to change a life of failure to a life of the noblest, most glorious victory, in the last moments on earth. That is what every man can do now. He may have been a disgrace to humanity in life, but in death he can be the most splendid type of hero. So you see I have no fears, I have no regrets. I have only to thank God for such a wonderful opportunity to serve Him and the world. No,

## GOSPORT AND SCOTLAND

if I must make the supreme sacrifice I will do it gladly, and I will do it honorably and bravely as your son should. And the life that I lay down will be my preparation for the grander, finer life that I shall take up. I shall *live!* And I shall be nearer to you than I am now or ever have been. I shall be much happier. I firmly believe in the communication possible between a soul or spirit in this life and one in the other. I believe that this communion is finer than any on earth. You *must* not grieve. I shall be supremely happy — so must you — not that I have ‘gone west,’ but that I have bought such a wonderful life at such a small price, and paid for it so gladly.

But on the other hand — if I *don't*. And let's look at this side until it is necessary to change. I shall come back to you a stronger, more sincere Christian. One buys strength with experience. When one is daily so near the other life — three narrow escapes — one gets a subconscious glimpse into it. Or, rather, you see yourself as you are. I have found it automatically makes me think and strive harder to attain my ideals. I have a great deal to do and not much time to do it in. I hate to break off abruptly, but I think we understand each other now, don't we? You are right in thinking of me and expecting me to be near if I ‘go west.’ I am convinced that you are right, and your thoughts and nearness shall be far more wonderful than you can possibly conceive now. I love you all so dearly and I am trying so hard to be worthy of your pride in me. Pray God that I may bring honor to you. I shall fight for that as I have never fought before.

PARIS, March 19, 1918

DEAR HENRY:

I just received your letter telling me of Stuffy Spencer's death and telling me to be careful. Of course I'll be careful, Henry, but you all at home simply *must* realize this! We all feel it so strongly, and it's such a consolation that it seems a pity you can't share it. We are all men with more or less red blood, and, thank God, we have ideals which are really worth while. You couldn't consider us men unless we believed in those ideas firmly enough to fight for them. They are *all*, in our lives that are really worth while in these trying times. To enumerate them would simply be to repeat what men, much more able than we, have said many times before. But I doubt whether you appreciate the real foundation from which they spring. It is simply



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

this — a true and sacred love for all you friends and relatives at home. As far as I personally am concerned, it doesn't make much difference to me whether the world is safe for democracy or not — I think I could do without it — but I'm not here to fight for myself. I think I am right when I say that the majority of men over here, whether conscious of it or not, are 'selfless' or nearly so. They can't be anything else. So, then, we *will* defend those ideals — if necessary with our lives — for unless we did, we could never have any self-respect. If you can understand this much, you must be able to understand what follows: We must all give up this life sooner or later, but it is not granted to all to give it up so nobly, as to us. To me the finest miracle in life is to be able, in the last few moments on this earth, to revolutionize one's entire existence, to forget a life of failure and weakness, and to die a hero.

The Gates of Honor are open to us, those lucky ones of us who are over here. We need not fear that we are not prepared to die, for no matter what we *have* been, in the last glorious moments we can die, not as the ordinary man, but fighting for the ideals we hold so sacred. Is there a nobler death? So you see, Henry, old pal, we're *lucky*, every one of us. Don't think for a moment that we have any regret — even the joys of life are secondary to the true happiness one experiences in dying for the ideals he knows are right. Don't think we have any fears. What is there to fear in such a glorious death? And don't grieve, Henry. There's nothing to be sorry about. Hold up your head and say: 'I'm proud *that* I knew "Stuffy." He was my friend. He died for the splendid ideals he tried to attain all his life. He gave up his life for his friends.'

It's such a consolation to me, and I think you all should share it. If 'Stuffy' had died before the war, I should have grieved, but we are at war — circumstances are topsy-turvy — I'm *not* sorry. I'm proud as I can be that 'Stuffy' was once a dear friend of mine. I'm proud to have known him. You can't be proud of a man and sorry for him at the same time; therefore be *proud* of him. That's my philosophy and it works, too.

I'm going to the front to-morrow. I don't think anything will happen to me. If it should be my lot to make the supreme sacrifice, you'll know that I did it gladly, and that I bought life's most marvelous reward, Honor, at a dirt cheap price, and that I was happy, ever so happy, that it was granted to me, unworthy



## GOSPORT AND GLASGOW

as I am, to give up my life for my friends, who, fundamentally, are my ideals.

So there you are, Henry, and there's not any end to my preaching. I'm not looking for trouble, and, therefore, probably won't find any. 'Wally' Winter was shot down by Huns recently. He dove his machine and when he tried to pull out of the dive it was so shot to pieces that it collapsed. Those who saw the fight said the scrap 'Wally' put up was the most magnificent and inspiring thing they had ever seen in their lives.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### GATES GOES TO DUNKIRK

MANY other cities of France were ravaged by the War, some of them obliterated, but the heroic martyrdom of Dunkirk was unique. Through almost four years it endured ferocious bombardment from the air, from the land, and from the sea, and yet it lived and proudly carried on its manifold activities. Because of this, Dunkirk was cited in the orders of the Army of France and decorated with the Croix de Guerre bearing the bronze palm. This insignia was added to the coat of arms of Dunkirk which since 1793 had carried the legend, 'Dunkirk has deserved well of *La Patrie*.'

It was therefore no new thing for this ancient seaport on the northern coast of France to exemplify the spirit of a nation which Germany found to be unconquerable. For a thousand years Dunkirk has survived wars and blockades, held now by France or Spain; again by England, which once compelled the destruction of its forts and the ruin of its harbor because the bold French sailors harried English commerce and swept the Channel with their fast armed luggers.

If you do not mind my repeating a passage from another book, 'The Fighting Fleets,' it will convey glimpses of the life of Dunkirk at the time when the American seaplane station was operated there. For the First Yale Unit this shattered seaport possesses a peculiar interest and memories both melancholy and sublime. It was where the bright life of Curtis Read suffered its cruel eclipse; where Kenneth MacLeish winged it into the beyond, trailing

## GATES GOES TO DUNKIRK

clouds of glory; where boyish Dave Ingalls displayed the genius for aerial combat that won him the sobriquet of 'Naval Ace'; where 'Di' Gates carried on so well that an officer of authority in his own service has been heard to call him 'our outstanding naval figure of the war.'

To walk about Dunkirk in the evening was to behold a city of gloom and desolation. Not a light shone from window of dwelling or shop. Every ray was carefully screened lest it guide the flight of the Boche overhead. Here and there in the streets a feeble lamp flickered, but it was so shaded as to be invisible from the sky. One blundered into passers-by on the pavements or stretched out his hand to feel for the walls in the narrow thoroughfares where the obscurity was profound. I had found the nights as black in certain coast towns of England, but their homes were intact and their people had not been slain by hundreds. The solid walls of brick and stone had resisted the explosions with extraordinary strength and tenacity. Even at night it was possible to perceive that no part of the city had been completely demolished. House after house was no more than an empty shell, roofless, the windows like eyeless sockets, the ragged walls looming against the sky, but the buildings had not been levelled. They were like the regiments of France which stood firm with ranks shattered.

... In the café we were talking together, a portly merchant of Dunkirk, a French naval lieutenant, a surgeon from the military hospital, the landlord who hopped about on crutches, having lost a leg at Verdun. The merchant was obviously one whose words carried weight. Clapping his hands across his broad waistcoat, he assumed an oratorical manner. His voice was sonorous. There was no affectation. A man genuine and honest whose eyes were sad.

'You will see Dunkirk for yourself, Monsieur,' said he. 'We live the active life, in the fourth year of the war. The factories are in operation, the shops are open, the harbor is by no means idle. The schools, the public institutions — all the functions of a city have been maintained. Dunkirk, which has lost its best blood through innumerable wounds, is vigorous. Even in its mourning clothes, it retains all its little coqueries; it does not desire to display its hurts, glorious though they may be; it does not wish to be moved to pity over its own sufferings. It is re-

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markable that under such a hurricane of iron and fire, people can live and work. We should expect the men to be capable of it, *n'est ce pas?* They deserve no more credit for being here than for mounting guard in the trenches. But is it not admirable that women, young girls, and children, can support it?

'It will intrigue you, my dear sir, to see the children at the time of a bombardment. Without haste they enter the shelter of the cellars. Some months ago, when the German 380-millimetre gun, 'Big Bertha,' sent during the morning forty-seven gigantic shells into Dunkirk, there was a very curious sight in the streets. After each shot the little boys and girls came up from the cellars, and on the steps in front of their doors they jumped rope, played diablo, and games of war. And when again the siren screeched its warning they disappeared as by enchantment under the earth.'

The narrator paused and his gaze was abstracted. His fleshy chin sank into his low collar and he sat immobile, brooding. The large, smooth-shaven face was heavy with care. Of his own losses and sacrifices he had nothing to say. The French naval lieutenant, a much younger man, was home on leave from the Mediterranean and spoke with a professional air.

'Here is something more. The nights of bombardment by aeroplane are distressing. They rack the nerves. There are also other annoyances. Taking advantage of moonless nights, the Boche destroyers used to approach to a point four miles off the Dunkirk coast. It is better regulated at present. Their light draft enabled them to pass over the Gravelines banks and the mine-fields. Then, dashing at full speed, they would fire salvos from their batteries. Before our land batteries could reply to them, they would escape as fast as possible. Thanks to the darkness, they might also elude the French and English patrol vessels before these could come up. In four minutes as many as three or four hundred shells would be hurled into the city.

"'Big Bertha?'" Ah, my friend, one easily becomes accustomed to the big Boche gun which fires on us from a distance of fourteen miles. On one day of last June, when the weather was clear and beautiful, this cannon opened fire at five o'clock in the morning and ceased at eleven o'clock. It had discharged a shell into Dunkirk every seven minutes. One is warned of their arrival. One knows that between the moment the gun is fired and the instant the shell bursts, there is time to get out of the way.



RESULTS OF TWO CRASHES AT DUNKIRK





## GATES GOES TO DUNKIRK

Watch towers equipped with sirens have been installed in several parts of the city. Night and day men are on the *qui vive*. Instantaneously the alarm is given in Dunkirk. There is no panic. One draws his watch from his pocket, knowing that he has one minute and thirty-five seconds to disappear under the protecting earth. This is the time elapsing before the arrival of the shell in Dunkirk.'

Just then the wail of a steam siren interrupted. It was imploring, insistent. Almost instantly it was echoed by the whistles of the war vessels in the harbor. A gun spoke, then another — the sharp voices of anti-aircraft ordnance firing shrapnel. The naval lieutenant moved to the street door and opened it for a moment. There was no stir in the darkened city. Two or three searchlights were sweeping the sky with pencilled beams of white radiance. The guns in the suburbs nearest the German lines were furiously busy.

The landlord stumped over to the row of candlesticks on the mantel and gave one to each of the company, striking the matches with a steady hand. This duty despatched, he went to find his wife and babies. The procession filed down a narrow stairway into a low-roofed cellar which was swept and clean, with chairs and tables of plank. There were also cots for the drowsy little ones. These came toddling down, three of them, in their night-dresses, rubbing their eyes, but with no signs of surprise. It had happened so often, explained the pretty mother, that the dear lambs thought all children divided their slumber hours between bedroom and cellar.

Even in this refuge it was possible to hear the wicked, buzzing noise of the Boche aeroplane engines as they swooped and hovered high overhead. Then came a prolonged, peculiar whizzing sound — the fall of a bomb through ten thousand feet of space. It struck and exploded, seemingly in the direction of the docks — a crashing roar and a concussion which was felt in the cellar. Another bomb was dropped, falling somewhat closer to the Square of Jean Bart. Then there came to our ears a different sound — musical, full-throated, uplifting — the song of great bells. It was no jangled alarum. The bells were attuned and chiming. They rang out a melody, a chant brave and martial which was flung from the high Belfry tower far and wide over the tormented city. They were vibrant with the spirit of Dunkirk. They were magnificently defiant.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Down in the cellar, one voice after another began to sing the refrain, in unison with the bells. The portly merchant raised his head and rumbled a basso while the lieutenant carried the tenor. The landlord was beating time with his crutch. The children, sitting up in their cots, piped in tones sweet and shrill. The great bells were quiet for a moment before swinging into the chorus again, and during the lull the landlord's wife explained, with shining eyes:

'They are singing it in many cellars. Always it is done. And always in the Belfry, when the Boches come to bombard, the chimes play the "Hymn of Jean Bart."' "

'An old song — a song that Dunkirk loves,' cried the naval officer. 'This is why the Boches try so hard to bomb the Belfry — to silence the "Hymn of Jean Bart."' "

Now it was ringing out again, mellow, throbbing waves of sound — the battle hymn of a free people, evoking from the dust of centuries the traditions and memories of a seaport unafraid. Out there in the Square, old Jean Bart himself was listening, the bronze statue in the great hat, the wrinkled sea-boots, the cutlass in his fist.

The strategic importance of Dunkirk as an offensive air base had been recognized by the British and French as early in the World War as 1915. The first R.N.A.S. station was established in that year with a view to destroying the German Zeppelin sheds. Then, as soon as the enemy occupied Bruges and Ostend and began to fortify the Belgian ports as submarine bases, Dunkirk was handily adjacent for seaplane patrols and bombing raids. The British equipment increased rapidly, under the direction of Captain C. L. Lambe, R.N., until four squadrons were operated at the Saint-Pol field, with an elaborate dépôt in Dunkirk itself, and a seaplane station on the harbor which coöperated with the French seaplane organization close by. In September, 1917, shortly before the arrival of the first American detachment, the British dépôt, or repair and machine shops, was almost bombed off the map and had to be moved to a new and less exposed position. The attacks



DUGOUT FOR CIVILIANS AT DUNKIRK



RESULTS OF A HUN BOMB ON A HOUSE 100 YARDS FROM  
OFFICERS' QUARTERS, DUNKIRK





## GATES GOES TO DUNKIRK

from the air were continued through six nights and the German planes dropped almost six hundred bombs of heavy calibre.

This was cheerful news for Lieutenant G. de C. Chevalier, U.S.N. when he arrived at Dunkirk in the fall of 1917 with orders from Captain Hutch I. Cone to install a seaplane station down among the docks. The purpose was to assist the British and French aviation forces in the Channel and North Sea patrols which were directed against the German submarines cruising out of and returning to Zeebrugge and Ostend. The idea of demolishing these bases themselves by means of huge fleets of bombing planes was a later development. At this time the Allied seaplane activities were one phase of the elaborate system which included all manner of surface craft and net barges. It was vital to the conduct of the war to safeguard the Channel passage for troops and supplies between England and France.

Dunkirk was an opportunity for the United States to lend a helping hand. And if her ambitious naval fliers complained that they had seen nothing of the war, here was plenty of it. To Lieutenant Chevalier it looked something like a forlorn hope and a sporting chance. The only site available was between the quay walls of the small harbor, in a basin close to the masts of the shipping. The French had found the neighborhood untenable for their own seaplanes.

The German planes found it easier to follow the line of the shore at night than to fly cross-country. They could usually locate the Dunkirk docks, warehouses, and ships and let their bombs go with a fair probability of messing something up.

Captain Lambe of the British air force was cordial and anxious to assist, but he wore a dubious air, advising the Yanks to get their bomb-proof dugouts finished before

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

they tried to build anything above ground. This was also the suggestion of the chipper little Commodore Hubert Lynes, R.N., whose office was three or four blocks away. He had been violently bombed so often, however, that he dismissed the risk quite airily. Admiral Ronarc'h of the French Navy solved it by living and working in a dugout roofed with boiler-plate, concrete, and several feet of earth. His discretion sensibly matched a valor famed throughout France. When you called on him to pay your respects, it was like sending in a card to a woodchuck.

Lieutenant Artemus L. Gates had been moving about, from Moutchic to Paris, then on a useless trip to Havre to find some motor trucks for the Navy which were not there. He was expecting to go to Gosport next, for training on scout machines (but Kenneth MacLeish was sent in his place), and he was delighted to hear that Dunkirk was his destination. He reached there on Thanksgiving Day, taking fifty enlisted men from Paris. Lieutenant Chevalier had a small staff, an Executive, a Doctor, a Paymaster, and a handful of men who had begun to make the dirt fly.

They had no machines of their own. Those used were taken over from the French. Barracks, hangars, and a repair shop had to be provided. The subterranean shelters were the most essential, as the force soon discovered for itself. They did not have to be told. One or two nights of clear weather, and the bombs were crashing about their ears. Never did bluejackets ply pick and shovel with more single-minded energy. Lieutenant Gates mentions it in this very conservative fashion:

Probably the main points that distinguished this station from other United States naval air stations in France and England were the three large dugouts which we made as a protection against enemy bombing and shelling, and also the anti-aircraft guns located about the station. Another feature was the many holes that were riddled in the hangars and barracks caused by

## GATES GOES TO DUNKIRK

enemy bombs that had exploded in the same, by shells exploding in the station, and by anti-aircraft fragments that had come down on the hangars from time to time. Because of the close coöperation and pleasant relations with the French and British, our work at Dunkirk was delightful and will never be forgotten. The life of the men and officers was hazardous because of constant bombing raids and shelling, and one was always in doubt just when the bomb would fall with his name on it, but, nevertheless, this seems to have made it all the more enjoyable.

The rugged Gates who could be happy in Dunkirk suggests another drawback:

The location of the station was especially poor owing to the great difficulties in getting in and out of the small harbor with a seaplane. Because of the cramped space and the frequent necessity of flying over the city to make a landing or a get-away, we suffered numerous losses from crashes.

His first assignment was as Chief Pilot with the duties of seeing that the machines were assembled, tested, kept in repair, and proper armament put on them. He had charge of the men in the flight division. It was not until February, however, that flying was begun on a regular schedule, while the submarine patrols were organized even later than that. It was impossible to obtain adequate equipment and experienced men any sooner. Gates had been there two months and a half before three pilots arrived.

There was plenty of work in the meantime. When the present writer visited the station shortly after Christmas, they were still digging away at those bomb-proof quarters and were proud of their handiwork. Mud and rain — wreckage all about them — a lanky French aviator strolling in to indicate with a shrug and a hopeless gesture that it was all of no use. *Mon Dieu*, the Boche had already marked this station on the chart to blow it all to little bits! *Pouf!* Lieutenant Chevalier and Gates trudged into a rough board shack now and then to hug the stove and

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

warm their bones. Feel sorry for them? Not much. They wouldn't have been anywhere else for worlds.

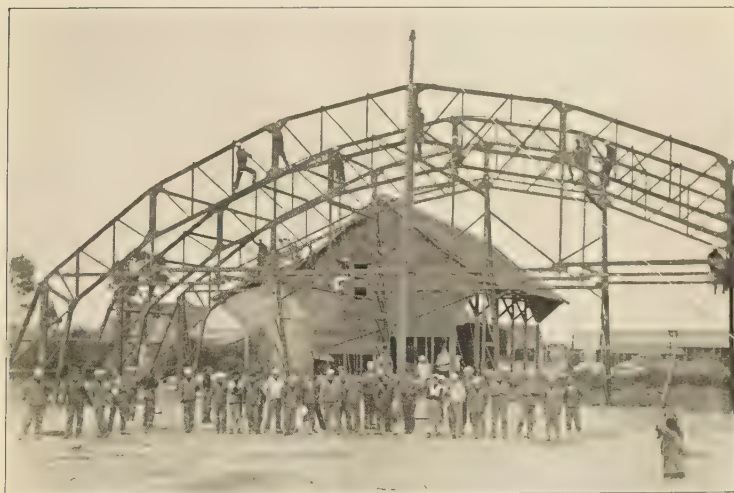
That the station suffered no casualties from bombs and shell-fire seems almost incredible. You had to be in Dunkirk to realize how rapidly and precisely, by night or day, human beings could imitate the humble mole when those sirens shrieked the alarm. Drill may have been overlooked in naval aviation, but this detachment learned how to double-time as one man and to make it snappy. Have you seen a union carpenter drop his hammer when the noon whistle blows? It was even faster than that.

In February Lieutenant Haviland was sent to the station. He was senior to Gates and had been a member of the Lafayette Escadrille. He therefore took over the position of Chief Pilot, and Gates was appointed Intelligence Officer. His duties were not burdensome enough to please him, plotting the courses of submarines, collecting data of various sorts, planning the work of the patrols, and gathering any information that might assist toward that end. He did not continue long in this billet because a qualified officer was sent to the station who had been trained in intelligence service.

Gates was then detailed as Assistant Chief Pilot to Lieutenant Haviland who went to Italy late in April. This left the place of Chief Pilot vacant for Gates who occupied it until he was given command of the station on July 1st. By this time bombing machines as well as seaplane patrols were in active operation and Lieutenant Gates had the satisfaction of flying in contact with the enemy. He remained in command at Dunkirk until he was shot down and captured on October 4th.



AWAITING RETURN OF PATROL, DUNKIRK



ERECTING HANGAR NEAR DUNKIRK





## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### FLYING OVER THE ENEMY'S LINES

THE American station at Dunkirk was about ready to begin its anti-submarine patrols in the latter part of March, 1918, when the German armies launched the great offensive which smashed through the British battle lines, crumpled up General Gough's Fifth Corps, and almost broke through to the Channel ports. It was the darkest hour of the war.

On Tuesday, the 19th, the bright weather changed to drizzling rain, but it cleared on the Wednesday, with the result that a thick mist was drawn out of the ground and muffled all the soggy landscape. That day was spent in an eerie calm, like the quiet which precedes a storm. When the sun set, the British troops in the front trenches were staring out into heavy fog which grew denser as darkness fell.

At about two o'clock in the morning of the 21st the British lines were warned to expect an assault. The forward zone was always kept fully manned and at 4.30 A.M. the order was sent out to man the battle zone. Still the same uncanny silence held, and the same clinging fog, under cover of which, all through the night, the Germans were pushing up troops into line, till by dawn on the fifty-odd miles of front between Croiselles and the Oise they had massed thirty-seven divisions within three thousand yards of the British outposts. Then precisely at a quarter to five, the whole weight of their many thousand guns was released against the British forward and battle zones, headquarters, communications, and artillery position, the back areas es-

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

pecially being drenched with gas which hung like a pall in the moist and heavy air.

Twenty miles and more behind the line, even as far back as the streets of Saint-Pol, shells were dropping from the high-velocity guns. Nor was the shelling confined to the battle-front. The French felt it in wide sections east and northeast of Rheims; it was violent north of Arras and on the line between La Bassée and the Lys; Messines and the Ypres area were heavily attacked and Dunkirk bombarded from the sea. In this inferno let loose, the British divisions, surprised and overwhelmed by numbers, were swept back mile after mile until their reserves had all been flung in, outposts resisting to the last, batteries fighting with only a man or two in the gun teams, handfuls desperately counter-attacking and snatching safety for others with their own lives.

In this grave extremity, when it seemed as though the enemy could not be stopped short of Calais and Dunkirk, Lieutenant Chevalier gallantly offered his pilots, men, and equipment to assist the British Air Force in that sector. The Americans reported to Captain Lambe for orders and for three weeks took part in bombing raids on Zeebrugge, low bombing raids on enemy billets and trenches, attacks on German destroyers, and patrols against hostile submarines. Lieutenant Gates was attached to Squadron 217 whose aerodrome was situated on the outskirts of Dunkirk. It flew DH-4 machines.

Dave Ingalls, Kenneth MacLeish, and 'Shorty' Smith arrived at the Dunkirk station from the training schools in Scotland just in time for the big show. These three pilots and Lieutenant Haviland were promptly loaned to Squadron 213, R.A.F., which happened to be doing sea patrol with Camel machines. This disappointed Ingalls who was eager to mix it up without losing a minute, but he admitted that it 'was great fun, for there was always a



SCOUT MACHINE STARTING OUT ON PATROL FROM DUNKIRK





## FLYING OVER THE ENEMY'S LINES

chance of a scrap.' In his letters to his parents, written during this period of service with the British, he indicates that he found it diverting.

*March 22, 1918*

We left Paris early yesterday morning and arrived in Dunkirk at about seven o'clock. It is certainly great to be here, and there is a great bunch of fellows. The C.O. and Lieutenants live in one house and all of us Ensigns live on the shore in a wonderful old French mansion. The food is perfect, — we have a piano, plenty of stoves to keep nice and warm, and a phonograph but no decent records.

It was quite exciting riding out from the station to see the wrecked buildings. The night before last there was a destroyer bombardment, which I was glad to miss, although the shells from a destroyer are not nearly so dangerous as a bomb from an aeroplane; there are more of them, and more noise. Last night after dinner every now and then the siren would blow, a barrage would be put up, and we could hear the twin motors of the Boche machines going on up the coast to bomb some other city. Of course, one may always hear the bigger guns at the front firing; they are just at the right distance to lull one to sleep.

This morning, as it was misty, there was no flying, but it cleared up about ten, and so this afternoon there were a lot of machines up, although at present there are not enough scouts for all of us. I got up in the flight officer's scout for a short hop. I had not flown a pontoon machine for some time, but it was very easy, and I had a great ride, stunting, etc. There is no telling when my machine may get here and so there will be little to do for a time. Just before I went up, a Boche photographic plane came over, and immediately a barrage was put up. It was very pretty to see the large puffs of smoke when the shells burst all about the machine, which beat it for home as soon as the barrage was started.

After flying was called off, we had a game of baseball on the beach. It is about the first real exercise I have had since leaving southern France, and it was certainly fun. It will be great when warmer weather comes and we can also swim.

At last I can appreciate that there is some truth in that saying, 'Sunny France.' After gloomy, foggy England, a sight of the sun is pretty slick.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

The day before we left Paris, we saw Mr. H. P. Davison and had a short chat with him. He was a most busy man and was on his way up to the front. Every one was crazy about him. He made several awfully good speeches in Paris, tho' I didn't hear any of them. From what he said, I don't expect Harry Jr. will be over for some time, tho', he, Harry, I know wants to come very much.

When I hear about the training the others fellows have had, I certainly thank my stars that I was trained in England. Well, Dad, I hope mother has sent some phonograph records, they would be most enjoyed; also some more of that block chocolate. It is very popular. Must go to bed — Here's hoping that our sleep is not disturbed by any bombs as a result of potting that Hun photographer.

*March 27, 1918*

To-day has been really the first dull day since my arrival, high wind and a bit of rain; therefore, as said wind is blowing toward Germany, the Huns are fixed and cannot annoy us with their boresome shells. Also no aeroplanes could fly to-night. This little act of nature's is particularly pleasing to me because I am officer of the day, and in the event of shelling or raids I should have not only to depart from my warm couch at every warning and tear out in the cold night air to a hot and stuffy dugout, but I should also be compelled to compel the men to do the same; and they have had very little sleep for this reason. Thank goodness, our palace is far removed from the camp and its proximity to the docks, etc., which the Huns endeavor to destroy.

The French brought down a German photographer here a day or so ago. I missed the pleasant spectacle, but all the audience said it was a beautiful sight. Indeed it is extremely difficult to find *any* sympathy, love, and affection in anyone toward these people.

Last night was quite interesting from the viewpoint of a peace loving man like myself. The Huns endeavored to bomb us, but were repeatedly thwarted by the most excellent barrage which the French A.A. gunners put up. I think perhaps they did drop one or two bombs but in vain and what is far better several of them were brought down. Maybe their defeat will keep them away for a time. After we were warned of their approach we went onto the porch outside our rooms and viewed the proceedings. At times one could hear the motors exceedingly plainly.

## FLYING OVER THE ENEMY'S LINES

They were evidently very low. As they came over a beautiful barrage would go up, the shrapnel bursting all over the Heavens — seemingly fruitlessly but really most effectually. Of course, it being a fine night, they afterwards did a bit of shelling too.

This German advance and British retreat is greatly disturbing every one. It is, to be sure, a very critical point and a lucky or skillful success by the Allies would, I should think, form the last chapter. But here we know very little of what is going on. I wish I could look ahead a week or so, but I think the dog-gone Germans have bitten off a bite too much, that they are taking a last chance and it is liable to turn out pretty slim. Even a partial success won't help them much.

As I have said, I am officer of the day, and as such am helping the Doctor censor the men's mail, a thing I have wanted very much to do, to find out their morale and feelings. They are, I think, taking everything in the right way, and are cheerful, and never complain.

During the last few days I have played cards with the Doc. and had tea with him. He is a mighty fine fellow, very clever, a Rhodes scholar who has been to Oxford and Germany for quite a while and has traveled all over. He's a great talker, and I certainly like to listen to him. This afternoon he quoted poetry of all sorts for about an hour. How the deuce he can do it I don't see.

*April 11, 1918*

In order to take advantage of the prevailing dud weather a bombing raid was brought about to-day. This raid has been impending for several days now, but certain conditions are requisite. And so this afternoon, with the clouds about 1500 feet, a number of the pilots were selected, and small bombs attached to the machines.

After the weather had been tested, we all got off shortly after lunch, everyone quite excited, due both to the fact that such a raid is unusual and also because it had been so long coming. As soon as we left the ground we headed out to sea. I happened to be second, and then ran along just below the clouds about five miles out to sea. Down so low it was very warm, and quite comfortable flying along, but I could not for the life of me clearly distinguish the shore, until finally we ran over the fishing boats which always lie outside this objective.

The leader turned in and up into the clouds, and I followed,

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

then catching sight of the nice big target. But unfortunately turning so fast set my compass swaying, and when I thought myself in position and dove down, I was nowhere near. I had in fact made a half-circle. So up again into the clouds only to repeat my failure. Each time I came down, I couldn't understand why nothing was shot at me. Finally at the third attempt I came down in great position, and dove upon the innocent-looking place to run into a lot of tracers, as those bullets are called which leave a sort of a flash from the powder in the rear. The necessity of our dropping the bomb from a low altitude gives their machine-guns business.

Although an approximate height is given us beforehand at which to let go, my altimeter being out of order, I went down, turning from side to side, until the correct thing for me seemed to be to beat it. Therefore, pulling the releasing lever, and opening the motor, I beat a retreat. And the enveloping clouds were a most pleasant locality. Of course we were all scattered in the clouds, so I saw nothing of the rest of the flight from the time we turned in, till I returned to the aerodrome. Several reasons prevented me from seeing what my bomb hit, but upon questioning the others, I found that I was not the only one in doubt.

Kenneth MacLeish was tasting the fiery exhilaration of it and found this experience with a British combat squadron intensely absorbing. In one of the following letters describing it, you find him so happy that he 'can't see straight.' 'Can you ever conceive of anything that's more sport?' It was the chance for which he had been yearning, and now ideals and action could be blended in the exaltation that is peculiarly vouchsafed when duty is whetted to a keen edge by perilous adventures. His letters written at this time are purged of all disappointment or discouragement.

At last I'm up where the sport is and you may believe me when I say it *is* sport, if ever there was any. The second day I came I went up in a machine and was flying around having a wonderful time, when I happened to look up. Right over my head there was a Hun taking photographs and the 'Archies' were bursting around me by the *thousand*. I learned at school that what goes up must come down, and I also learned at school



## FLYING OVER THE ENEMY'S LINES

that one should avoid being in the way when heavy articles want to come down. I then decided, after no thought on the matter, and less delay, that the best place for your youngest son was some distance below and away from the spot I was then in. So I descended with great alacrity.

As a welcome, the Huns shelled the place from the water, but they suffered for their pains as you probably read in the papers. I don't mind bombs, but this business of shooting real bullets at one's head gets tiresome after a few seconds. We get bombed every night, but that isn't bad. The worst thing is that big gun up the line which shoots a shell five feet high, seventeen inches in diameter, and weighing 1900 pounds. Last night they shelled us until five this morning every three or four minutes with one lapse about midnight. That really is a bit hard on one's nerves, because when the shells explode it nearly shakes one out of bed. All the shells landed within half a mile of the house but none very close, as we're out of range, or very hard to reach, as we are not near what they are shooting at, but the base is.

I have been made temporary ordnance officer. I'm in charge of all guns, bombs, ammunition, sights, etc. It's just the job for me, as it simply fascinates me. There is lots of sport attached to it, too. I had to carry eight bomb detonators in my hand on a springless truck over the world's worst road. At every bounce I pushed the things away from me, and said, 'Good-bye, Kenney!'

Those Bums! They're at it again to-night with the big gun. I just heard the siren, but didn't think it was that. I thought it was just another bombing raid. The siren just blew four times. That means a land bombardment. It will blow now, once every time they see the flash in the sky which signifies the departure of the shell some twenty miles away.

A wild rumor says they shelled Paris from the lines — that's nearly sixty miles. That's too much for me — twenty is quite enough to overwork my imagination, but the Boches have perhaps been rude enough to disregard my imagination. I have no machine yet, so I won't go on patrols for a little while. But this ordnance job will keep me busy for some time to come. You ought to see the barrage they put up against these Hun machines! It's perfectly beautiful at night, with the flashes and 'flaming onions,' etc. I guess it's ticklish work for the old boys.



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

*April 5*

I'm so happy I can't see straight. I'm actually on fighting patrols, and I actually fly over Hun land! Can you ever conceive of anything that's more sport? You should have seen me on my first patrol. I'll never forget it. I'd never been so high in my life. You know when you get up real high — about four miles up — the air is so rarefied that if you move around much, or exert yourself — you begin to pant and feel as though you had run a fast 100-yard dash. And cold!!! Wow! Thank the Lord they don't make it that cold down near the ground! We went way, way back behind the Hun lines; you could see the lines stretching away in the distance marked on either side by flecks of smoke from the artillery, and back a ways by captive balloons — mere specks so far down, and they were up a few thousand feet. I had a good look at two of the Hun's biggest bases — in fact, three. It gave me an odd feeling, to think that it was up to me to try to destroy those cities lying apparently so peacefully below, way down there below the clouds. I couldn't see why, at first, but suddenly I changed as I heard a ping and a screech, and saw a puff of smoke below me. It was "Archie." He wasn't very friendly, though, thank goodness — that is, he wasn't near enough to worry us.

Pretty soon, way below, we spied a couple of seaplanes. We worked around to get between them and the sun and then dove. The poor bugs didn't see us at all. I was so engrossed with my guns and my sights that I didn't watch the leader. To my surprise, when I looked up, he had come out of the dive and turned away. I held a consultation with myself, a hurried one, in which we decided, myself and I, after *no* deliberation, that being alone with a couple of Huns on my first patrol was a rather big mouthful. I decided not to open up until they did, because I suspected something funny when the leader turned off. I remembered the old trick the Huns have of leaving a couple of fat two-seaters apparently unguarded, and when they are almost attacked the Huns appear in myriads, apparently from nowhere. I therefore 'pulled myself to pieces' and took stock of things. There wasn't a Hun in the sky — not one below me. That *was* strange, and I began to feel a severe chill about the ankles. In the meantime, my patrol was about out of sight in the distance. I looked at the Hun seaplanes again and I nearly died laughing. They were Allied machines! I certainly was the goat, all of that. I'll never



FIFTEEN-INCH GERMAN GUN 'LOEGENBOOM', WHICH FIRED ON DUNKIRK



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hear the end of it. I don't care, though, as I certainly had all the sensations I could calmly (?) take care of. If they *had* opened up, I should probably have remembered that I was due to be some miles away, and was late already. . . .

*April 7*

Just a word or two which will shatter all your illusions about the flying game. It may be great sport some of the time, but when it isn't sport it's positive torture. Yesterday, for instance, we were ordered up in a rain. The clouds were low, and visibility almost impossible. All we did was get wet, cold, and mad, also frightfully 'Archied,' as we were low and beautifully silhouetted against the clouds. To-day was worse than any torture I've read about. It was horrible! In the first place we went four thousand feet higher than I've ever been before in my life. I had on a pair of silk gloves, next to my hands, a pair of rubber gloves over that, and then a warm, fur-lined, fur-covered pair of flying gloves. That combination is the warmest possible, to my mind, yet I froze two fingers absolutely solid, and my thumb and one other finger were frost-bitten. The altitude gave me the worst headache I've ever had. Of course, there was practically no pressure up there because it is halved at only seven or eight thousand feet. It affected me strangely. At first it was nauseating, then I felt weak and dizzy; finally, after about half an hour I got used to it, and the only effect was a splitting headache, and a funny noise in my ears, evidently due to the lack of pressure; the veins around my ears expanded abnormally at every heart beat, and cut off my hearing entirely, so that when my heart throbbed I couldn't even hear the terrific roar of my motor, or the tat-tat-tat-tat of my machine guns which were firing eight or ten inches from my face. I was winded, of course, all the time, and felt stifled, but every one is. I was in this condition for over an hour, under some really enterprising 'Archie' fire. So you see, flying isn't all the milk and honey that it's cracked up to be, but, by George, I wouldn't give it up for all the love, money and marbles on earth. It's too fascinating. The clouds were beautiful. They were those huge columns of great bulging puffs that almost make you frantic because you can't jump out of your bus and roll around in them. If I ever become demented, that's the first thing I'll try.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

213TH SQUADRON, 61ST WING,  
ROYAL AIR FORCE, *April 11, 1918*

I don't know of anything else to write about except myself, so you must tolerate a bit of egotism. This little stunt we had to-day will suffice to give you all a thrill, as I had one starting with ankles and gradually going all over my body. They rigged our scouts up with bomb-carrying devices for little bombs. The idea was a bombing raid in broad daylight. For a good time, give me one of those things! Wow, I don't think I'll ever get over it. The clouds were only one thousand feet up, and we were to get near our objective, climb into the clouds, and when we thought we were directly over, dive down to about three hundred or four hundred feet and let go our pills. The first man over had a wonderful time — they didn't even shoot at him. The second had a little hot weather, the third some *real* hot weather, the fourth had a — of a time, the fifth had to turn back and try it again, the sixth wasn't much more successful. Then I came! In my wildest dreams of all hell turned loose, I never pictured anything like that. There must have been a thousand machine-guns working a twenty-four-hour a day schedule. The tracer bullets were doing loops and split-turns around my neck. I got dizzy watching them. I put my finger on both triggers and had my two guns going full blast while I dove. It was no use. I saw in a second that I could never get there. The rapid-fire pom-poms were putting up a barrage in front of me, and it was getting closer and closer as I dove. There were so many bursts of smoke that I lost sight of the target. I thought of Home and Mother and zoomed back into the clouds to wait till it quieted down. When I came out again, I was completely lost — I couldn't even see land. I flew by compass until I came to the coast and, thinking I was east of my objective, began to work west along the coast, being 'Archied' to blazes every foot of the way, first on one ear, then on the other, and once in a while on my back.

I came to a town I had never seen before and thought I was in Holland. I kept on and finally came to a town I knew, but it was twenty-five miles west of my objective. I didn't like the idea of going back, so as this town was an excellent objective I at once decided to drop my pills there instead. I looked around for my target, found it, and went into the clouds. After flying for a second or two, to my horror I popped out of the clouds into a patch of perfectly blue sky, only twelve hundred feet up, and



## FLYING OVER THE ENEMY'S LINES

directly over the hottest 'Archie' battery the Huns have. I thought I was gone sure, but I guess the Huns were as surprised as I was, and about as scared, because I dove on them, both guns doing their —— dest. I dove right for the 'Archie' battery first, and you should have seen those blokes drop their work and find that they had a date miles away. Lord! did they run! Then I leveled off, dropped my pill, and absorbed myself in the business of getting back to the clouds, without flying straight for a second. Do you know, they never even fired a single shot at me.

When I got back I expected to find that the bus had been riddled with bullet holes, but to my surprise there wasn't one. I was disappointed and tickled to death at the same time — this combination causes one to itch violently. I learn something every day. To-day I learned never to be the last machine in a daylight, low-bombing stunt. I may know enough to keep out of trouble one of these days. One never knows, does one? No, but two does — isn't they?

213TH SQUADRON, 61ST WING  
ROYAL AIR FORCES, *April 11, 1918*

### DEAREST AUNT MARY:

It seems a year since I've written to you, but as you see by the title above, things have changed with me and life has become strenuously active. I'm so glad that I could take part in this, the greatest battle of the war.

My part today in the great war was one I shan't forget for many a year. We had a low, daylight bombing stunt. Dropping small bombs from little scout machines, at an altitude of three hundred feet in broad daylight is my idea of the most sincere and earnest way of asking for trouble. Well, we all got back alive, so why worry?

Up at twenty thousand feet it was so cold that the alcohol in my compass froze solid, and the castor oil in my oil gauge froze solid. I wouldn't dare tell you how many degrees below zero it was. You wouldn't believe me, but just ask some physicist. We had to sit perfectly still up there for an hour and a half to protect some artillery spotting machines. I actually winced all over with the pain every time my heart beat. I don't see yet why my head didn't pop open. I really doubted, before I got used to it, whether I could stick it out. I felt faint and weak; I couldn't get my breath; I was winded all the time. But my orders were to stay

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

over the spotters. So over them I stayed, but I expected to faint any moment.

Add to that the fact that those —— Huns were shooting at us with six-inch anti-aircraft guns every second and you have an enjoyable afternoon with the airmen. If only some Hun machines had come along, and we could have picked a scrap, all would have been well, because one even forgets one's name in a scrap, let alone the fact that he is freezing to death.

Oh, it's a wonderful, wonderful game, in spite of the uncomfortable high patrols. A man can use his skill and his brain, and once in a while his nerve, if he has any. It's glorious. I wouldn't trade my existence for any other in the world; and even if I should be called upon to give my life for these ideals that I love so dearly, though it might seem an untimely death to some, I am perfectly happy in knowing that I have lived.

On April 20th, the American airmen returned to their own station at Dunkirk and resumed the interrupted routine. The last colossal effort of the German military power to break the deadlock and hammer out a victory had been checked and thwarted. The battle of the Lys, as this prolonged agony was called, smouldered into May and flared here and there until the lines were stabilized, but the issue was decided in those first three weeks when France and England finally merged their forces under the supreme command of Marshal Ferdinand Foch. This was the master-stroke that marked the beginning of the end. The armed strength of America finished it.

The naval air station at Dunkirk seemed almost like a bit of flotsam on the tremendous tide of conflict, and yet the intrinsic worth of human achievement is to be measured by other standards than those of size and numbers. Men are great, though there be but a handful of them, so long as they ignore discouragements, laugh at obstacles, and regard duty as preferable to life.

To Dave Ingalls and Kenneth MacLeish, after their service with the elaborately equipped British air squadrons, it was an anti-climax to return to the station down



OFFICES AND SICK-BAY, DUNKIRK



C.O.'S OFFICE, DUNKIRK



## FLYING OVER THE ENEMY'S LINES

among the Dunkirk quays. 'Di' Gates, as Chief Pilot, was struggling to keep his sea patrols going with meager equipment and the lack of almost everything excepting a splendid personnel which grumbled only because it could not get more fighting. MacLeish can bring before you some typical incidents of those weeks late in the spring of 1918.

DUNKIRK, FRANCE, May 6, 1918

Well, may I never see another day like this one. If I do, I'll fall over dead. To begin with, two big machines went out on a patrol alone. One got into a spin and crashed, killing the front observer and seriously injuring the pilot. The rear observer saw what was coming, threw his guns overboard and braced himself for the shock. When he came to, he had a broken leg, but that was all. In that condition he sent in three messages by pigeon, rescued the pilot, and dove for the front observer, but though he could touch him he couldn't clear him from the wreckage, and his body went down when the front half of the bus sank. That's quite a stunt for a man with a broken leg, and badly shaken up, isn't it? He is made of the right stuff. The other machine came to the rescue, and with five men on board started to sink. Two other machines and two scouts went out, followed by another big machine. It reached the wreck and took all the load it could. One of the scouts arrived, saw what the situation was, brought two motor boats over, and just skinned into the harbor as his motor completely wrecked. Two or three of the big rescuing machines collapsed before they got in. Only one of the seven machines came back without a mishap. Dave Ingalls was in one of the scouts, and he left about ten this morning. At five this afternoon nothing had been heard from him. At seven nothing. You can imagine how I felt, if you know what close friends Dave and I are. My motor was completely down at noon. I put on some overalls and my mechanic and I had the motor up and running at seven o'clock. Two big machines went out at seven, but came back with no news. While they were out, nine Huns came over. I could only guess at what had happened to Dave. I loaded my guns and set out to find him or to get even with somebody — I didn't know who. Just then a telephone message came through. *Where* do you suppose that kid was? Way down by Le Havre! He had just hit the coast in time. A



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

few more miles and he would have been out in the Atlantic. I wish you could have seen the expression on the sailors' faces, from wornout despair to a four-foot grin, all at once.

There is a terrific artillery duel up at the front tonight. I've never heard such a scrap. The sky is just aflame with the flashes.

I expect the Huns will be over again tonight. It happens every single night in the week when the weather is good, and if it weren't for the fact that the French have installed about six new, loud 'Mournful Marys,' I would be able to sleep through it. I'm dead tired, because for three days straight I was up at four for an early patrol and didn't get to bed until midnight for various reasons. I got eight hours sleep out of forty-eight and fourteen out of seventy-two. Add to this a day like to-day and you have a weary son. I can scarcely keep my eyes open. This game can't compare with the sport we had with the English. I haven't even seen a Hun here, let alone have a scrap. We used to have scraps and bombing parties before. Those were the good old days.

May 12, 1918

Well, we're under way again here at the seaplane base. It took a long time to get started and a good many men gave up their lives, but it's working now. I have been on a few patrols this week, not over six or seven hours' flying, so I'm far from tired. The weather insists on being abominable, but what can you expect? This is sunny (?) France. Nothing interesting happened until Thursday. I usually sleep through the air raid, but we had one Thursday night that nobody in this house slept through. I slept through the first half, I've discovered, but sort of sub-consciously I heard the screech of a bomb as it whistled through the air. When you can hear them coming it's time to duck. I was just getting ready to wake up when something helped me along. It came in the form of the most sickening *thud* and the most frightful explosion I ever heard in my life. It bounced me out of bed, and my old legs were working before I hit the floor. Result: when my feet did touch the floor, I crashed into the wall on the other side of the room. But I wheeled around and dove for the bed just as the first brick hit the roof overhead. I got under the covers, and you should have heard the *débris* falling. It hit the building behind ours, a three story brick building. It just crumpled it up into the basement. Even the wreckage wasn't ten feet high. I don't know where all the *débris* went,

## FLYING OVER THE ENEMY'S LINES

but enough bricks to build three houses like it seemed to fall on the roof over my head. Luckily, like most buildings in town, it was deserted, so no one was hurt. Now I can't sleep through air raids any more, which is very disconcerting when you have an early patrol on.

Nothing interesting happened Friday. Yesterday the 'skipper' called all pilots into his office and asked how many wanted to fly two-seater land machines that carry 460 pounds of bombs. I thought this would be more apt to show action than these sea-plane patrols, so I said I did. At least, we'll have a better chance of getting at the subs, although after about five hours of patrol some thirty miles out to sea in land machines, I swore never to try it again. But I hear they have a new invention which isn't cumbersome, and which will float a machine for seven hours. If the motors are any good and the mechanics are good, I won't mind at all.

My old flight commander out at 213 Squadron got three Huns in three minutes a few days ago. And the boy who flew opposite me in the flight got one. Pretty fair show, what? One of those chaps is a crazy nut. He got a bullet in the leg in a scrap, but instead of going home he chased the Hun all the way back to his aerodrome. Then he went home and they sent him to the hospital. In ten days he was back. He had orders not to fly, but one day he took an old pair of shoes and wrote out a note which he tucked inside of them. In addition, he took two fifteen-pound bombs. He went over to this Hun's aerodrome and came way down low and played around waiting for somebody to come up and fight him. Nobody came up, so he dropped the shoes with this note inside: 'You are too damned scared to come up and scrap me, I see, so here's a pair of boots for ground duty.' When the Huns ran out on the 'drome to pick up the boots, he dropped his two fifteen-pound bombs on them and came home.

Dave Ingalls began to feel low in his mind for lack of excitement and because of vile weather. Also he had to look forward to another dose of training, in the Army school at Clermont-Ferrand, and this threatened to ruin his amiable temper. To his mother and father he spluttered as follows:

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

*May 13, 1918  
On Board*

As you may have become aware by the above address, I am on duty to-night, and am inclined to be thankful that the weather is perfectly punk, thus eliminating any chance of some Boche monstrosity, i.e., an air raid or big-gun shoot, which would necessitate my being awake the greater part of the night. Which little thing when coupled with the certainty of my having an early morning patrol would by no means raise my spirits.

It has rained all day, in fact if I had thought to count rainy days, I believe that common sense would urge me to build a raft. It seems to rain here in every month at least forty days and nights. I really can't understand why the inhabitants are not web-footed. At any rate they soon will be. There is a rumor to the effect that the army will soon be compelled to give up land aeroplanes and take to pontoon machines and boats.

Well, Muzzy, a couple of days ago I wrote Dad that I was in for more training. That is almost a joke, isn't it? Honestly if my further training in aviation should ever definitely end, I should feel quite lost. But I wish that my last six months of training would begin soon and would be situated in a place as pleasant as the first six. Tho' it would be impossible to equal Palm Beach and Huntington.

*May 17, 1918*

Lately we have, by some strange freak, had fine weather, and as a result, every night here has been most picturesque and interesting. With a beautiful new moon shining down upon the smooth sea, with countless Archie batteries barking along the coast for miles on each side, with shrapnel bursting high in the heavens, whence comes — during the lulls between salvos — the distinct and never-to-be-mistaken hum of the Boche flown motors, with the many far-reaching searchlights, star shells, flaming onions, and the occasional rattle of machine guns — the last defense against some daring Hun, who has slipped through the barrage, and, coming in low over the city to drop his load of bombs, has become plainly visible to those on the ground — with all this, I say Dunkirk at night is a wonderful sight.

In the actions of the inhabitants, however, little of the strain in which they live is apparent. For, as I sit upon the porch overlooking the beach, I see many couples, sprung from every nation,

## FLYING OVER THE ENEMY'S LINES

wandering about arm in arm, watching others who bathe, in spite of the cold, or lie about on the sun-warmed sands.

And in the channels just off the coast, loom majestically the Hun destroyers. While continually planes of every sort and description soar overhead, either steadily climbing towards the front, or, throttled down, half gliding back to rest—their dangerous tasks completed. Now, when the evening quiet has fallen, the low rumble of the guns on the lines becomes more audible, and often, at the explosion of one of the heavier guns, the house shakes, and the whole earth seems to tremble, as if in response to some mighty Satanic blow. Surely it is well called 'Tragic Dunkirk.' Fortunately, however, during bad weather there is absolutely nothing doing here. So we make up for lost sleep and quiet down a bit then.

Yesterday was an unlucky one for our station. One of our boats on patrol crashed landing at sea, and one of the observers is missing. A pigeon brought the message, so we went out to try and find them and help.

I went in a scout, and due to the wind shifting and my compass being at fault, I got lost in the misty weather, and after flying for about two and a half hours, landed by a fishing boat on account of being nearly at the end of petrol and oil. The boat was a French schooner and they towed me in to Fecon, about a hundred miles down the coast from Dunkirk. It took so long to get in, about five or six hours, that I was unable to return after getting filled up and had to stop at Dieppe at a French seaplane base for the night.

As I had set out in a hurry to try and give immediate assistance, I had no tunic, cap, or money. But fortunately the French Commander is a fine fellow, and put me up for the night, and introduced me to the American Consul where I had lunch to-day. The latter is very nice and supplied me with funds, besides asking me to a dance at his house tonight. He has two daughters, who altho they have never been in America talk and act quite naturally. And so, weather permitting, I'll return to-morrow after a very pleasant time.

But you should have seen me trying to make the fishing men and the mechanics here understand what I wanted. My French is about as good as my Italian, i.e., *très mal*. But the funniest part was my great surprise and wonder of what had happened to all of France, when after going about twenty miles straight



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

out, I turned around and flew, for almost two hours, toward what I thought was Dunkirk. I honestly thought that perhaps the Germans had really wiped France off the map.

And you should perceive your son, dressed up in a borrowed coat of an English officer's, cap, and wearing a leather flying coat, about Dieppe. Hereafter besides gas and petrol I shall carry with me a dress suit and top hat. This morning I called up Di at our base to let them know where I was. They thought I had become bored with the war and had flown home to U.S.A. Poor old Shorty, you know whom I mean, has always been made sick by flying and the other day he had a physical exam. and was declared unfit for flying. So now all he is is a ground officer in charge of repairs. Of course he feels very badly about it, and it is certainly a shame.

Clermont-Ferrand was not such a happy experience as Dunkirk. Ingalls could hand it no bouquets, and MacLeish found that he also disliked the way the Army did things. In this they were living up to naval tradition. MacLeish said it for both of them when he wrote home:

I was awfully disappointed with the United States Army. This is the first time I have come in contact with the real organization. Up at Dunkirk we used to treat Army men with every possible courtesy, give them transportation, and do all that we could for them. In return, they have refused to issue us blankets, mattresses, transportation, and any comfort whatsoever. They have quartered us with our enlisted men, which is absolutely prohibited in the Navy, and they have given us the same sort of quarters that they give their own enlisted men. Of course it's all right; they are living up to regulations to the letter, but I certainly never shall forget the lack of courtesy and decency.

... The country down here is, without any exception, the most beautiful I have ever seen. I admit with some malice that this is the first time I have seen the weather behave itself for two weeks straight since October. Every day is a perfect day and every night is glorious. Aviation usually takes on away from mountains, and to monotonous plains, but in this case scenery rather than efficiency was sought, and the result is that the countryside is beautiful beyond words, but the places to land are



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as scarce as hens' teeth, with the result that every time there is a forced landing the machine is totally wrecked and the Government loses \$17,000 and an aviator or two.

I don't know how long this course will last, but with this perfect weather it can't last long. It certainly is a let-down to come from the front where I was ordnance officer, in charge of all armorers, bombs, ammunition, etc., as well as flight commander in charge of two hangars and their crews, and also of five other pilots, to this place where I was, until recently, under every pilot in the school in rank, and where I am given a demerit or put in bounds for trifling little things by men who haven't had *half* the experience I have had, or been in the service *half* as long.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### LOVETT AND THE NORTHERN BOMBING GROUP

JOINING the Royal Naval Air Force during the crucial battle of early spring had been an emergency duty. Thereafter such service as the American pilots performed while attached to British or French squadrons was for the purpose of training them, by practical experience, to operate with the Northern Bombing Group. This also was the object of sending them to the Army school at Clermont-Ferrand. The Dunkirk station, with Lieutenant Gates in command, continued to carry on its activities but was no longer an isolated unit. It became a part of the general scheme of the Northern Bombing Group which was placed under the direction of Captain David Hanrahan, U.S.N. The threads of the narrative must therefore be twisted together to include the inception and organization of this large enterprise which, delayed by difficulties unforeseen, would have been successful had the war lasted longer.

When previously mentioned in these recent chapters, Lieutenant Robert Lovett was at Felixstowe with his notebooks and a great many ideas sizzling under his cap. Observation — reflection — deduction — and there you were! John Vorys may have been a bit jealous of an intelligence which functioned so competently when he spoke in such a flippant manner of his comrade as ‘mooning over a picture of Adèle, receiving and sending big confidential letters from and to Captain “Hutch-Eye!” Cone and Admiral Sims and the aforementioned lady and then off again to pastures new.’

The truth is that Lieutenant Lovett was insatiable in pursuing information to its lair and a master hand at mak-



BOB LOVETT, VISITING SENATORS, AND A CAPRONI



SOME OF BOB'S BOMBS AND OBSERVERS



## LOVETT AND NORTHERN BOMBING GROUP

ing use of it. His reports to the Navy Department from Felixstowe would make a technical monograph. They covered the whole theory and practice of manning and operating flying-boat stations and the systems of patrol. Much of this material was found valuable by the Department in preparing its instructional data and in formulating its plans for expansion overseas. It was very unusual for the opinions and recommendations of a boyish Reserve officer to be weighed with so much respect by those far above him in rank and naval experience. His Felixstowe reports evoked letters of commendation from Captain Cone and the Department itself.

His original purpose in visiting Felixstowe had been to learn all he could before taking command of one of the American stations in France. While working at the problems of maintaining so large and costly a plant, and the results obtained, he dug out certain figures that, when put together, interested and surprised him. It was reported that Germany had built, up to that time, three hundred and fifty submarines of which only fifty, as a maximum number, were cruising in British or European waters during any one month. Only fifteen per cent of the fleet was effective. Eighty-five per cent was in German docks and harbors for repairs, outfitting, and rest. In April, 1917, Admiral Sims had reported to the Navy Department, 'It is estimated that between thirty and forty submarines operate at a time in the waters surrounding the British Islands and on the French coast.'

From the records kept by Commander Porte at Felixstowe it was discovered that during a period of three years the average seaplane on patrol over the North Sea had been compelled to cover an approximate total of twenty-two thousand square miles before sighting an enemy submarine. This seemed rather startling. Furthermore, after sighting the submarine, the chances were about even, or



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

'fifty-fifty' of getting within bombing range. And the odds were then one to four against hitting the objective. Compared with all this, the needle in the haystack was absurdly easy.

The Spider Web Patrol was effective, in a way, but its operations covered a limited area and were more or less guess-work unless the course of a submarine had been 'fixed' by radio bearings. The main point was that Germany could turn out submarines much faster than the Allied naval forces could destroy them. It was obvious that they were much more vulnerable when assembled at their own bases, instead of dispersed over many thousand square miles of ocean. Because of the distance across the North Sea, it was impracticable to devise a sustained air attack upon the German submarine harbors of Bremen and Wilhelmshafen.

The bases of Ostend and Zeebrugge (with the canal to Bruges) on the Belgian coast were accessible and close at hand. And they sheltered the most numerous active flotillas of sea-going submarines that Germany kept in commission. If these nests could be wiped out, the menacing problem would be largely solved. This was recognized by the British Navy. Hard pressed in other quarters, however, it lacked the men and material to conduct bombing raids except intermittently from its flying field at Dunkirk. Brilliant as were the exploits of the sailors under Vice Admiral Roger Keyes and Captain Carpenter of the *Vindictive*, later in the war, they failed to smash or to bottle up these bases.

Incessant and ferocious bombing by night and day would make them untenable. This was how it appeared to Lieutenant Robert Lovett. The merit of his conception was in the realization that here was a job for the United States, with its unlimited resources, to undertake and carry through. The next thing was to convert the naval

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authorities to this idea. Here was where Lovett conspicuously made his mark. Amidst the welter of schemes and programs, some of them plausible, others fantastic, which flooded the aviation desks in London, Paris, and Washington, he was able to present the lucid, orderly data for selecting the Northern Bombing Group as one of the big things to be attempted.

As the first step, he was granted continuous travel orders by Captain Cone, after leaving Felixstowe, and took the courses in English schools of bombing and gunnery. Then he spent several weeks in the R.N.A.S. Intelligence Department, absorbing information like a sponge and indefatigably making notes. He was more than ever convinced that an enormous wastage of effort, men, and material could be saved. Returning to Paris in January he was appointed Assistant to the Chief of Operations at the American Naval Aviation headquarters. He explains:

While there I devoted the office hours to studying the formation and coördination of our existing seaplane stations on the coast, and my evenings I utilized in preparing a plan for the formation of a group which could be employed in attacking submarine and naval bases, concentration points, naval stores and factories. I had proceeded up to this time on the theory of using seaplanes, but at a meeting of the Allied Air Council at Army Air Headquarters, I met Colonel Spenser Gray, D.S.O., and interested him in my plans. He was the greatest authority on bombing that the war produced. He proved conclusively to me that it was impracticable to use seaplanes because in an attack on these bases they would come in contact with land planes acting in defense of these points and their inferiority would result in their destruction. Furthermore, it would necessitate the attacks being carried on in the daylight, which would mean high altitude bombing and would reduce the chances of hitting the objective.

Colonel Gray introduced me to the heads of the British Night Bombing Squadrons then operating at Couderkerque, and these officers very kindly placed their records at my disposal as well as

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their personal advice. It became evident to me that night planes were the medium with which we could do the greatest damage, and my suggestions being then completed, I took the matter up with Captain Cone, and told him that Colonel Gray would be delighted to talk the matter over and give any assistance he could. At this time Colonel Gray was attached to the Army to organize their bombing squadrons and depots. I explained that Colonel Gray had done the real work in obtaining the statistics comprised in my report and I urged that in view of the disorganized condition of the Army Air Service at that time, which was suffering from too much politics and too little gray matter, Colonel Gray be attached to our service for the furthering of such plans as met with the approval of Captain Cone.

In order to obtain a working knowledge of such operations and particularly to learn the enemy country and the nature of the objectives, I requested permission to be attached to the British Squadrons then operating against these objectives on the front. This commission was granted and I was given one week to complete my duties in Paris. At this time I was supposed to take command of the air station at L'Aber Vrach and it required a good deal of pleading with Captain Cone and Captain Craven, my immediate superior, to convince them that the course I suggested was the wiser.

On January 28th, 1918, Lieutenant Lovett submitted a memorandum as the result of all these studies and conferences. This document, together with the reports that followed it, exerted an important influence in the creation and operating plans of the Northern Bombing Group.

### MEMORANDUM

1. Before this receives consideration I wish to make it clear that I understand the difficulty of undertaking too much at once, and also heartily agree with the prevailing feeling that some end for our present program must be in sight before anything new can receive full discussion. It would seem, nevertheless, imperative that plans for the future must be made at the same time at which present operations are on foot and should in no way conflict with these. For that reason I call particular attention to the fact that the purpose of this is solely to gain exact knowledge for future use.

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2. It is understood that in the coming year a new factor will enter the operations of the U.S. Naval Air Service, since we cannot hope to confine ourselves solely to patrol duty. I believe that bombing raids upon U-boat harbors will be not only necessary but the only way to meet and check the U-boat menace.

3. Facts seem to indicate that only a small percentage of U-boats in commission are actually out on offensive duty at one time. For the waters of France and England less than 50; that would leave some 250 or 300 in home bases. A cursory examination would therefore lead us to conclude that the wisest way to check them would be to get them in large numbers, which means in their bases. In the case of Stations 14 and 15 <sup>1</sup> I am convinced that, if operations from these are to be successful, the present type of boat will have to be discarded. I say this because the impossibility of piloting these boats at night is admitted by Captain Porte, who regards them as a boat designed solely for anti-submarine patrols and not for offensive bombers. The boat structure makes their employment at night an extremely hazardous and inefficient procedure unless advantage is taken of the very brightest full moon.

4. It would seem proper at this point to explain that the F type of boat, as developed by Captain Porte, was designed for a particular duty — that of anti-submarine patrols — and the possibility of it having to land at sea influences the design to such an extent that a seaworthy hull became a factor of the first importance. This of necessity lessens the carrying capacity for bombs. I wish to point out, therefore, that if this type of boat is confined to the type of duty for which it was expressly designed, in my mind there is nothing better at this date. Should it, however, be contemplated for any other type of duty, such as offensive bombing, I feel certain that its performance would not only be discouraging but extremely inefficient. It is distinctly a one-duty boat.

5. As multi-motored machines become more general in use I am inclined to anticipate development of a machine which, relying upon its reserve power units, will be able to do away with the extra weight of hull and will be able to employ this in bombs. I firmly believe that the Germans will be the first to develop this type. If this is done it is merely a question of time before the F-boats become obsolete. The logical successor of the F-

<sup>1</sup> Killingholme.



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

boats is, therefore, a many motored land machine of the Handley-Page or Caproni type. The effectiveness of these machines cannot be over-estimated and at present, to my knowledge, no American pilot has ever gathered any personal information regarding them. If in the future, therefore, our operations will include some kind of an offensive warfare I believe it to be imperative that we gather all possible first hand information upon the Handley-Page and have it in mind when making arrangements for our 1919 program.

6. With reference to bombing attacks I believe the following to be the cardinal points:

1. A special type of machine is absolutely essential for this special work.
2. The most effective type of machine is undoubtedly night bombing. This, therefore, increases the importance of intimate knowledge of the operations of these machines; the method of landing them; the method of contact while on patrol and the way in which the object is reached and recognized.
3. The third point, second in importance only to the special type of machine, is a special pilot. This man should be trained for the type of work in which he is to take part and must know the science of it as well as possible.

7. If these three points are thought wise, the logical conclusions reached are that first hand information must be gathered regarding these — the large bombers — from an active source. This I should say was the Handley-Page Bombing Squadron now in operation. This Squadron is by far the most deadly weapon any of the Allies have yet discovered. Its effectiveness can only be realized when the actual reports of damage done by these planes are considered.

8. It is my conviction that the U.S. Naval Air Service can take part in the warfare ahead of anything at present contemplated, by specializing upon large bombing planes with a view to their use in future offensives. I cannot urge too strongly that we start now to gather information in order that we may have a working basis upon which to plan future programs, and above all so that in this planning we may know what average performance to expect.

9. I respectfully request that I may be allowed to visit the





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R.N.A.S. Handley-Page Bombing Squadron, at present stationed south of Dunkirk, with a view to collecting all possible data on their operations and with a special intention of discovering the possibilities of these planes and the opinions of the pilots upon the use of pontoons on the present Handley-Page type. While the present status of our stations is such that the Operations Division is seldom called upon for any great amount of work, I believe the absence of my slight help would scarcely be noticed.

As a result of this memorandum, Lieutenant Lovett received orders to report to Captain Lambe at Dunkirk and was attached to No. 7 Squadron, 5th Wing, with which he served three months. His purpose was threefold; to collect information which might serve to organize naval squadrons for work with land machines; to get practical experience in the operation of large night bombing planes; and to find the best sites for locating the new stations required.

Lieutenant E. O. McDonnell was a strong supporter of the plan and became associated with it during these preliminary surveys. He also was sent to visit Captain Lambe's organization at this same time. The two reports submitted, Lovett's and his own, were the basis upon which the general scheme of the Northern Bombing Group was approved by the American naval authorities abroad and the Department in Washington.

They are far livelier reading than most official documents of a technical nature. What Bob Lovett calls 'practical experience' meant diving into a hellish barrage three miles square. The flaming onions startled him more than the showers of 'Archie.' Unofficially he confesses that he was scared to look out of the machine. It wasn't so bad if you were the first or second machine in the flight formation, but the tail-ender caught it when the barrage was well stirred up and going strong. Wow, you were combing those flaming onions out of your hair! With the emotional phases carefully repressed, Lieutenant Lovett's report was made out as follows:

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1. In accordance with Commander's Orders, dated March 20, 1918, I left Paris with a motorcycle and sidecar on March 21, arriving at Dunkirk the same night. On the following day I reported to Captain C. L. Lambe, D.S.O., R.N., for duty in connection with night bombing in the naval area and the location of suitable sites for six night bombing squadrons and six day bombing squadrons in the Dunkirk-Calais region. A separate report upon the location of these fields and the establishment of a central repair base is submitted and no further reference will be made to them in this report.

I was assigned by Captain Lambe to No. 7 Squadron, No. 5 Wing, at Couderkerque. There I was questioned regarding previous experience and training and upon finding that I had taken the R.N.A.S. course at Felixstowe they attached me definitely to a machine. My first flight was made the evening I reported. As the German offensive started on that day all R.N.A.S. Squadrons were instructed to use every effort toward making their work effective, and this order resulted in attempting to raid even in unpropitious weather conditions.

On March 23 a light mist and smoke screen made the ground visibility bad but higher the night was fine. A raid was made by four Handley-Pages on Bruges Dock. Visibility over the objective was excellent — 6272 pounds of explosives were dropped on the Docks and excellent results were obtained. All four machines returned safely and made good landings in spite of the ground mist which rolled in about midnight.

2. On the following night Bruges Docks were again the objective, and thereafter raids were made on every possible night, and on different objectives as the military needs of the moment demanded. I was allowed to go on every raid while I was there, even though many were outside the naval area. We made altogether eight attempts, succeeding in every case but two and on these raids being forced back after crossing the lines due to encountering hail or rain over enemy territory.

3. In the bombing of Bruges Docks the effect of concentrating on one objective was clearly shown. In five days we attacked Bruges four times, twice in the day time. The Germans have concentrated many highly trained anti-aircraft batteries and seventeen searchlights about Bruges Docks. It is considered the most dangerous objective there is. Its defenses far exceed anything one could imagine. On the first night an extremely in-

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tense barrage was put up, consisting of 'flaming onions' — a series of green luminous balls attached to one another somewhat in the manner of chain shot — of shrapnel shells and of high explosives. Defensive balloons have been reported, although we encountered none or else escaped them on the raids in which I took part. The barrage is almost box-like with layers of high explosive and shrapnel and an over-generous supply of green balls. Due to the small size of the objective and the practice of confining efforts against the Docks alone, the enemy is able to obtain a terrific concentration of his anti-aircraft defenses. On the first night the barrage was very intense, although the searchlights were somewhat hampered by a ground mist. On the second the barrage was more intense than that of the first night, due probably to the anticipation of a raid. On the third day a day raid was effected. On the fourth day a second day raid was effected, the anti-aircraft growing weaker all the time until on the last night only high explosive and green balls were put up at us, the supply of shrapnel evidently having been exhausted. The day squadrons reported that their second trip met with less anti-aircraft and more aircraft defenses.

A trip a few days later found the defenses in perfect order again, an additional searchlight having been added and an extra supply of 'flaming onions' seems to have been collected. These green balls were designed, it is claimed, to set fire to a machine which they might strike and with which they might become entangled. Early machines being covered with oil and gas drippings were probably affected by these green balls but the modern machines seem to be immune from such danger. They serve now as examples of 'hate' and are probably designed to intimidate the pilots and frighten them from a straight course to the desired objective.

4. On the raids behind the battle against railway junctions and lines of communication, a difference in the type of anti-aircraft encountered was observed. Instead of a barrage the important railway junctions seem to have highly trained crews instructed to shoot at the machines and not attempt a large expenditure of ammunition. It was surprising how accurate the enemy anti-aircraft was. They seem to have little difficulty in finding the correct height almost immediately upon warning of our approach. Their searchlights are far more powerful than those employed by the Belgians and French from Ypres to the coast.



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During a raid on Bruges Docks, carried out on the night of March 31, we were caught by the seventeen searchlights at Bruges and held by them until we passed over the City. The pilot attempted a second run in the opposite direction over the Brugoise Works to leave a bomb that had hung up, and they caught us on a second run also. I succeeded in putting two lights out; this was probably due to the fact that the crews of these were frightened at the tracers directed toward them down the beams. Three Lewis machine guns are mounted in the gun-layers cockpit. During the raids on Railway junctions we carried about 25 trays of 97 pounds each but the most I used on one trip was nine. This was when a railway station and trains were fired upon.

5. With our full load of bombs we were unable to climb more than 7000 or 8000 feet. This necessitated our bombing from a glide, making us some 5000 or 6000 feet over the objective. At this altitude we were frequently hit by shrapnel and high explosive fragments; never, however, in a vital spot. One blade of our starboard propeller was badly broken due to being hit by a fragment of high explosive. The motor ran, however, with very little vibration when throttled and the other three blades showed no twisting upon landing. The majority of holes were in the wings in almost every instance, or in the tail; explosive bullets fired at us over railway junctions and while crossing the lines in practically every instance lodged in the tail planes. On one occasion a new tail plane was necessitated by the fact that the main spar had been cracked and some aluminium tubing carried away.

1. *Continuous bomb of one objective.* The effectiveness of concentrated bombing of a single objective until it has been rendered untenable, has been shown by attacks on Bruges, Zeebrugge and St. Denis-Westren. It is observed that, due to the enormous expenditure of anti-aircraft ammunition the continuous use of the guns and the effect on the morale of the gun crews, the defenses become weaker each succeeding night. It would appear, therefore, that given enough machines to bomb an objective all night, with day squadrons to carry on the work in the day time, on each succeeding day the defenses should become less effective, thus allowing day squadrons to bomb from lower altitudes and night squadrons to increase their effectiveness. If on the last two or three days of a prolonged continuous bombing operation

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numerous small incendiary bombs were dropped to complete by fire the destruction wrought by the high explosive bombs, I believe such a submarine stronghold as Bruges, Zeebrugge or Ostende could be made untenable if not stamped off the map.

2. *Danger of intermittent bombing.* I am convinced from my limited recent experience that a distinct danger lies in intermittent bombing, due partly to the moral effect on the people of the town who may feel that their defenses have succeeded, but due primarily to the fact that any intermission is utilised by the enemy not only to strengthen his defences but also to accumulate a vast supply of ammunition. This has been shown by the English operations in the Naval area. In a previous report I gave the opinion of Captain Lambe regarding this matter and the importance of it has become increasingly evident. The English bombing squadrons cannot concentrate on one point until it is destroyed, since they are subject to call by the Military Headquarters in the field and are compelled to bomb such objectives as the military needs of the moment demand. This arrangement keeps them from concentrating their efforts in the naval area and upon one base and forces them to bomb ammunition dumps, railway junctions, etc., over a widely scattered area, thus giving their main objectives time to recuperate and strengthen their defences. I would urge, therefore, that the mission of our bombing program in the naval area be very definitely understood and agreed upon, and that the Commander on the spot be allowed to concentrate his entire effort within the naval district, taking each base in succession until it is destroyed, and, further, that it be clearly understood by the Department and the Military authorities that these squadrons shall not be called upon to do any promiscuous bombing of military objectives except at times of great crises.

3. *Need of carefully trained pilots.* I cannot too strongly urge that the greatest care be used in training pilots for such night bombing work, as an exact knowledge of the geography of the area in which their efforts are to be directed is of cardinal importance. The pilot must know the tricks of night flying so well that he can devote himself to the geographical landmarks. To obtain experienced pilots it would seem that a carefully developed school for the instruction of pilots in night flying, and especially in bombing, be established upon the conditions existing on active service. Such a school could, I believe, be organized in the

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United States and training given to pilots in night flying and bombing, and to some extent in the geography of the country, the important landmarks, etc., by the use of large topographical models. I respectfully suggest that this matter be carefully considered and that the possibility of placing an experienced practical British Bombing Expert in charge be investigated.

4. Second to the proper training of pilots I am inclined to place the need of a carefully developed meteorological service, whose duty it should be to inform the bombing squadrons of the wind velocity at different altitudes, of the weather conditions existing at various points along the coast and down the lines, and a system whereby reports may be received from these different stations upon telephoning to these stations before starting a raid.

5. Due to the frequent ground mist in the Dunkirk-Calais region, I was impressed with the need for secondary or emergency landing field at which merely a system of landing lights would be necessary, so that in the event of a mist making landing at the home field dangerous or impossible, or in the event of bad weather making further progress dangerous, the bombing planes could be signalled from these emergency fields and land there for the night. Furthermore, should more than one Handley-Page squadron be housed on the same field, it would probably be desirable to have some of these machines land at secondary fields. In the report on landing field I submit a further suggestion in this connection.

### *Enclosures:*

I submit herewith copies of notes made upon the organization of a squadron, the duties of the various officers, the methods of effecting raids, the system of signals, the equipment of hangars, rigging and assembling of the Handley-Page machine, the overhaul of the motors and the raid control of a Handley-Page squadron. These notes are not up to date in every instance since they were made before the change in complement of the Handley-Page squadrons, and several changes have been found necessary and desirable in other parts. These notes were made by an expert in the R.F.C. who was gathering information for the establishment of R.F.C. Bombing Squadrons, and a copy was given to Lieutenant McDonnell and myself by the Records Officer who had prepared them for submitting to the Air Force.

Lieutenant McDonnell outlined in detail the proposed

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organization of the bombing squadrons. It was comprehended that to wait for the necessary material and equipment to be assembled and forwarded from the United States might mean a delay of months. Meanwhile there was sufficient personnel abroad to man Handley-Page and Caproni bombing planes as fast as deliveries could be obtained in England and Italy. Lieutenant McDonnell's report covers all this ground. Parts of it read:

March 20th I made my first raid in a Handley-Page. Flight Lieutenant Allen, a Canadian, was pilot. My station was in the tail, to man the upper and lower rear guns protecting the tail. Our bombs were dropped in a line across the Bruges docks where submarines are housed and repaired, and where there is much shipping activity. Bombs were dropped from an altitude of 5800 feet. The bombs dropped were four 250, and six 112-pound bombs. One of these bombs stuck in its rack. I shoved this bomb out as we turned and passed back over Bruges. A good line across the dock was plain to the pilot and observer. The anti-aircraft defenses of this place are probably the best in the world. An intensive barrage is put up over the Bruges dock when an attacking plane is heard approaching. This barrage consists of a countless number of green luminous balls, reaching from near the ground to about 10,000 feet, and also a large amount of shrapnel and high explosive bursting from about 4000 to 10,000 feet. A plane going below 4000 feet would be picked up by the searchlights and attacked with many large calibre machine guns. I counted sixteen searchlights of great power at Bruges. Four planes participated in this raid.

On March 22nd bad weather prevented a raid. Lieutenant (j.g.) R. A. Lovett, U.S.N.R.F., arrived from Paris and we called together on Captain Lambe. Lieutenant Lovett had already gotten many suggestions, and advice from Captain Lambe on a previous trip. These were, I believe, embodied in his report. The following are the most important results of this talk with Captain Lambe:

Captain Lambe strongly endorses our proposed entrance into the bombing operations. He believes we should have six daylight and six night bombing squadrons. With these squadrons, he would concentrate in turn on each one of the objectives in the



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Dunkirk area. He would constantly bomb an objective, day and night, each succeeding flight coming lower as the anti-aircraft defense becomes feebler, the last flights dropping many small bombs and thermite incendiary bombs to entirely destroy the place, as it is his belief, that after a number of continuous raids, the anti-aircraft and fire working parties would be demoralized and hors de combat.

On March 23rd, I visited several aerodrome sights with Lieutenant Lovett in the vicinity of Gravelines. Those sights were considered suitable for further investigation and have been noted. The commencement of the shelling of Dunkerque with the 15-inch guns was made as Lieutenant Lovett and myself passed through the city. The first two shells dropped close by us as we passed the docks on our motorcycle. This night I went on another bombing trip with Flight Lieutenant Allen. This time I went as gunner in the forward cockpit. I had a much better chance of observing everything that went on. Bombs were dropped in approximately the same manner as on the first raid. Anti-aircraft was very intense, bursting close enough to shake the machine, and to allow us to smell the explosions. In passing through the barrage our machine was hit in three different places. One 250-pound bomb stuck in the rack. A note was passed back to the rear gunner to push this down when signalled to with a flashlight. On the way home we made a line over the Aartrick aerodrome and the bomb which had been stuck was pushed down. A direct hit, or a very close one was claimed.

On March 24th I went on a daylight raid in a DH-9 with Flight Lieutenant Stevens. We carried eight 20-pound bombs. Six machines participated in the raid, flying in formation. My position was that of rear gunner and observer, which necessitated working the high altitude sights and dropping the bombs, in addition to fighting the after gun. We got away in formation, flew down the coast to Calais and back up the Belgian coast at sea to get our altitude. We crossed inland near Zeebrugge at an altitude of about 15,500 feet, coaching the pilot on a line across the Bruges docks. I dropped my bombs in a line commencing just before the sight was on and ending after the sight was on. An intense anti-aircraft fire was immediately put up, the Germans seeming to get our altitude immediately. High explosive was bursting in the midst of our formation with great rapidity and precision. Several machines were hit,—the one I was in





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getting a hole in the wing close to the fuselage. Shortly after this, five German fighting machines appeared at our tail. Several of them attacking, one was shot down by one of our planes in our formation, another came in close enough to be engaged by my opposite machine and myself. I was able to get a good burst in at this plane as it attacked, placing my sights right on the front of the machine, and observed my tracers to pass right under the body. As tracers usually go a little low, it is very likely the plane was hit. Before I was able to get another burst, the plane did a steep turn and headed in the opposite direction. Three of the German machines followed us back to the lines, keeping out of range, apparently waiting for a straggler with a weak engine to fall out. Several other German machines came on to have a look, but apparently decided it was unwise to attack. One of our planes was quite badly shot up, having part of its rudder shot away, a large hole where a piece of shell went in the side of the fuselage and out of the top, and two machine-gun bullets through its forward main spar. All, however, returned safely.

On March 26th, Captain Cone arrived and called on Captain Lambe with Lieutenant Chevalier and myself. That night the objective was changed to the railroad junction at Valenciennes. As the British Army was being hard pressed, it was necessary to render them assistance by bombing an important junction to the rear of the German line. This was a distance of about ninety miles to the Southeast of Dunkirk. Ten Handley-Page's participated. On the way down we climbed to 10,000 feet and dropped our bombs in a line over the junction. Anti-aircraft was active all the way down in German territory, but was not particularly bad at Valenciennes. Returning, we were caught by a searchlight at Lille. This held steadily to us, the pilot seeming to be unable to get out of its ray. Accordingly, as had been arranged, I opened up with the rear lower gun, firing down the beam with tracer bullets, spraying them well around, which put out the searchlight. We were caught after crossing the lines into our territory by bad weather which obscured the moon and stars, forcing us to descend to 3000 feet. Gusty winds made us lose our way. Heading in a northerly direction we finally hit the coast, turned east, then west, found ourselves at Calais, then turned east until we found Dunkerque and landed at our aerodrome after about five hours in the air. Two of the ten planes did not return. It is possible that they landed in our lines some-

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where and then have gotten back the next day after I left. This night a German, twin engine Gotha came down in an aerodrome close to ours. I did not get the details, but it probably lost its way.

By destroying the bases at Ostend, Zeebrugge and Bruges, we will have put a stop to all submarine operations from the Belgian Coast. Just how much of the total submarine damage is done by these bases, I am not prepared to say, but certainly believe a large porportion is. Intelligence reports from Bruges alone show many submarines docked at Bruges and undergoing overhaul and repairs. Submarines from Bruges operate from the harbor at Zeebrugge. Intelligence reports have shown that something like forty submarines operate from these two places. It has always been hard for authorities to realize the damage done by bombing squadrons, but it has been proven by the Handley-Page squadrons beyond a doubt, that great damage has been done. The very fact of the wonderful aircraft defense at Brugge and the enormous expenditure of ammunition at this place shows that the Germans dread these bombardments.

It is recommended that at the earliest possible moment, six night squadrons of ten each bombardment planes be placed in operation in the Dunkerque area, and in addition to this, in the same area, six daylight bombardment squadrons, eighteen DH-9's each. It is recommended that Captain Lambe's offer be accepted and arrangements be made so that our first squadrons will work at the same aerodrome with the British squadrons; our pilots and observers working with their pilots and observers, and that as our pilots become experienced our own squadrons be formed. With this end in view, I recommend that we first order 100 Handley-Page and Caproni's and 200 DH-9's. This will allow a surplus for training and breakage. This would be a beginning, and as we are able, we should expand more. Next, start training schools for bombing in the States. Train pilots to fly by day and by night and to make long flights at nights, finding objectives in an unknown country; train the observers in navigation, charts, and maps, bomb-dropping and machine gunnery. This will probably come along later and these schools would furnish material to build up our squadrons.

For the start, we should send the best pilots and observers we have right out to the front with Handley-Pages and Capronis and work them in with the British squadrons. The British could

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easily accommodate enough pilots and observers to give us a start, and we would not have to wait for our school in the States, which will probably take some time to get going. Aerodromes should be selected, a special party being detailed for this purpose and arrangements with the British and French put under way. Commanding Officers for the first squadrons should be designated and started to work on their organizations and gathering their personnel and equipment.

Soon after this report was submitted, Lieutenant McDonnell was sent to the United States to undertake the tremendous task of arranging for the material and machines, special training of pilots and so on. It was a continual struggle to keep things moving with so many other urgent demands clamoring for attention in the Navy Department and the difficulty of convincing one bureau or another that the Navy ought to be in this business of conducting air operations in land machines. The Marine Corps argued that it had a prior claim on such a program as this. This was adjusted by making it a joint enterprise, with Major A. A. Cunningham, an experienced pilot and an able administrator, in command of the Marine force.

In a long message cabled to Admiral Sims on April 17th, Captain Cone presented the requirements of the Northern Bombing Group. Part of this is worth quoting to show what a really huge project it was.

After careful investigation and consultation with officers on the ground, strongly recommend that following program be undertaken immediately. First establish six squadrons night bombers of ten planes each, either Handley-Page or Caproni type. Personnel requires 180 officers and 1764 men including 72 pilots, 72 observers, 144 aerial gunners. Wastage will require six pilots, six observers, and six squadrons and in addition ten spares to be held at bomber repair base and twenty spares at repair base Pauillac. Total 90 night-bombing planes required. Wastage will require 20 additional planes per month.

*Second*, establish six squadrons day bombers of 18 planes each, either DH or Bristol types. Personnel required 282 officers, 1266



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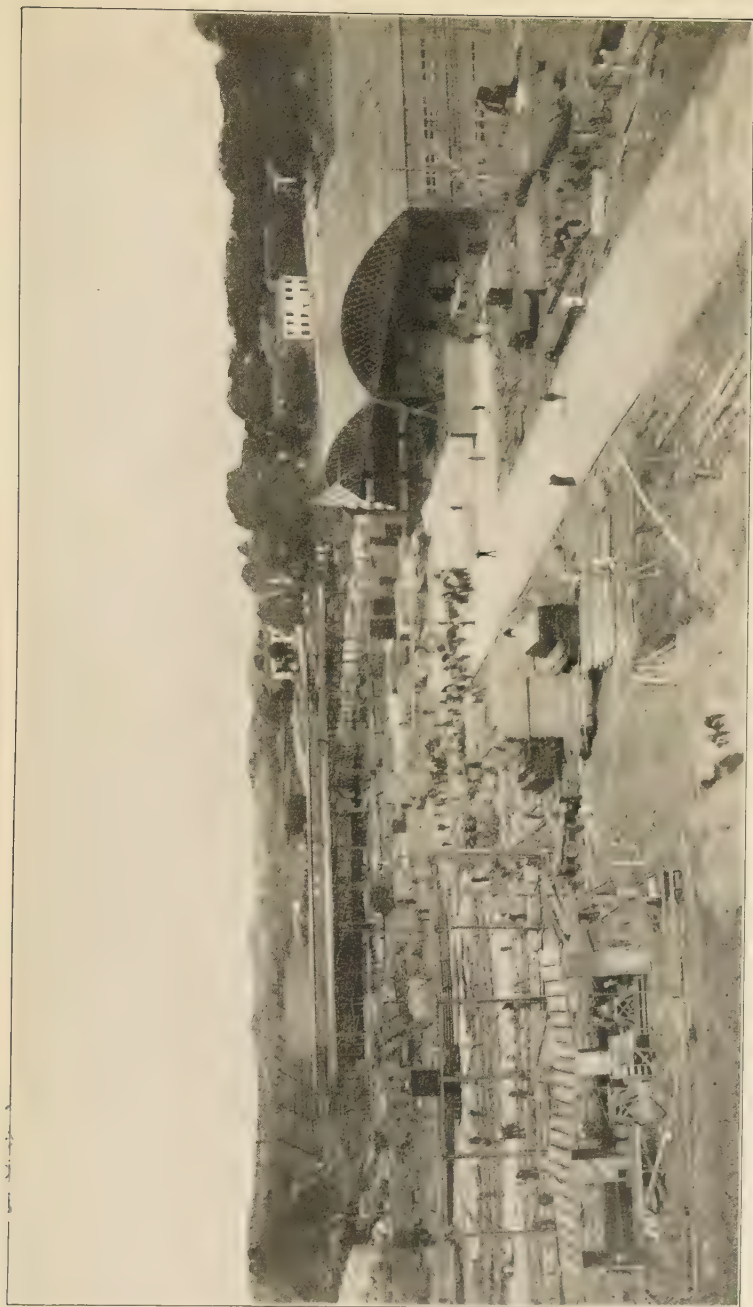
men, including 120 pilots, 120 observers. Wastage will require 16 pilots and 16 observers monthly in addition. One hundred and eight planes required for six squadrons and in addition 36 spares at bomber repair base and 54 planes at Pauillac.

... *Fourth*, establish bomber repair base behind squadrons as branch of general assembly and repair base Pauillac. Personnel required, 40 officers and 1960 men.

... Repair base will require total industrial floor space of 120,000 square feet, preferably four buildings 80 by 200 feet, five buildings 50 by 150 feet, balance in small buildings built locally. Men will be housed in tents at outset, later in light wooden barracks made in France. Require tents for 2000 men at outset. Send necessary hardware, stoves, and roofing for camps for 5097 men and 527 officers. Ship also one complete dispensary medical outfit for 2000 men and six outfits for 500 men each. Ship following motor transportation or equivalent, all with complete supply of spares, 22 Cadillacs, 24 Ford touring, 24 motor cycles with side-cars, 24 three quarter ton trucks, 36 three ton trucks, 34 six ton trucks, 34 flat two ton trailers, 34 wing trailers, 18 five hundred gallon tank trailers, 34 light tenders or passenger trucks, 46 heavy tenders, 16 ambulances, seven searchlights on trucks, 15 ten-drop telephone switchboards, one fifty-drop board, 250 miles of circuit, necessary lighting material for all shops, hangars, and barracks, 28 generating sets, 40 sixty-gallon extinguishers on wheels, 300 three-gallon extinguishers, 1000 Pyrene extinguishers, 7000 fifty-gallon gasoline drums.

All of the above in addition to material previously ordered or requested for seaplane and airship stations. Ordnance requirements to follow. Will also require list tools and supplies similar to British establishment. Lists to be delivered by Lieutenant McDonnell.

This last sentence is eloquent. If you doubt it, ask Eddie McDonnell who had to go shopping for these few little things! Harry Davison has testified that most of the stuff was miraculously assembled and delivered at the wharves for shipment. And, following this, the long-suffering McDonnell had to fly Capronis from Italy! No wonder that Admiral Sims states in his book that 'Lieutenant Commander E. O. McDonnell deserves the greatest



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credit for the energetic and resourceful manner in which he executed this difficult task.'

As you know, the complement of the Northern Bombing Group was subsequently reduced by the Navy Department to eight squadrons, four day and four night, only part of which had been assembled when the Armistice was signed. Eastleigh, England, was finally chosen as the assembly and repair base instead of Pauillac.

Meanwhile Bob Lovett had been keeping everlastingly at it. He left the British squadrons for a while to return to Paris and prepare organization plans in detail, to draw up 'type allowance lists,' to get together material in France and England, wherever it could be found. It is not too much to say that he knew more about the Northern Bombing Group than any one else. Captain Hanrahan had been senior officer of a destroyer division cruising on convoy duty out of Queenstown and had made a fine reputation for leadership and as a competent fighting sailor. He had to familiarize himself with the novel and complex problems of the Northern Bombing Group. In this he found Lieutenant Lovett invaluable.

Having cleared his desk in Paris, Bob went back to Captain Lambe's headquarters and selected three fields to be developed for the use of the Northern Bombing Group. Lieutenant Fearing and Lieutenant Guggenheim had handled the transaction whereby the Italian Government promised to deliver Caproni planes for temporary use until the Navy could obtain its own machines from the United States. Lieutenant Commander Atlee Edwards explains that Italy 'agreed to supply us with a number of bombing planes for which it was to receive in turn cargoes of raw materials, such as iron, lumber, etc.'

This was Lovett's reason for making a visit to the 18th Italian Squadron then operating on the Rheims front. He desired to make the acquaintance of the Caproni. Other

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members of the Unit learned to know it more intimately. Their expurgated opinions and harrowing experiences will be met with in later chapters of this history.

On May 13th, Lovett turned up again at Captain Lambe's headquarters to learn more about wholesale bombing methods under Colonel Gray and to advance the preparations for the elaborate American naval project. Discouragements and disappointments began to cast shadows over it during the summer. To a large extent, the Capronis proved to be a wash-out. For this the American officers who had recommended them were in no wise responsible. The machines delivered failed to comply with the specifications. The motors were inferior, the workmanship faulty. 'We were basing all our hopes on the arrival of the day bombers in July, and also the 44 D.H. type planes,' says Bob. 'These, of course, did not arrive, nor did the Handley-Pages which were promised first in August and then in October, and which never came. The British, however, agreed to supply our wants temporarily, and throughout the period of forming our group were most helpful, loyal, and unselfish. We could have accomplished very little without their training facilities and equipment.'

It looked as though the Northern Bombing Group might bring together most of the members of the First Yale Unit who were serving overseas. It did, in fact, result in something like a reunion for a brief period before the Armistice. Lovett had a finger in this, I have no doubt. He believed in the crowd and had no hesitation in announcing it. He was in a position to know their records in France and England and says of them:

It was interesting to note that at every station to which members of the Unit were ordered they became Chief Pilots or heads of departments. The main reasons for this, as it impressed me, were their enthusiasm and initiative. These qualities counted tremendously with enlisted men and war-worn Allies.



## LOVETT AND NORTHERN BOMBING GROUP

I have heard it said time and again, while in a position to hear such things as assistant to the Chief of Operations, 'What we want most is a man with something to fight for.' To my mind that is exactly what every member of the Unit had, and it is more than a coincidence that in every fitness report forwarded to the commander for his signature, these men were graded highest.

'During the formation of the Italian squadrons, Lieutenant Callan, the commanding officer, became very much excited because he felt that he was not getting enough experienced officers as flight commanders. One morning in a meeting of the Executive Committee Lieutenant Callan jumped up and exclaimed, 'If I don't get one of that Yale crowd of fliers for each of my squadrons, so I'll know what to build on, we might as well hold a tarpaulin muster for the whole lot of us before we start.'

Again in London when the Killingholme project was demanding pilots and the Northern Bombing Group was in need of the same, a knock-down war of words took place in Captain Twinning's office between him and Atlee Edwards because the latter said that the authorities in the Bureau were 'letting Commander Whiting hog all of the Davison Unit.' Edwards therefore cabled a protest to the Bureau at which Kenneth Whiting came back with a counter claim that 'the only place he knew of in the air service that was getting the pork was the Northern Bombing Group.'

I mention these incidents, not to flatter the individual members, but to show that the Unit, as a whole, had made a name and reputation for itself. It was seldom asked whether one of these men was a first-class pilot, but merely whether he belonged to the Unit. This was good enough.

## CHAPTER XL

### CURTIS READ PAYS THE PRICE

O, happy boy, you have not lost your years!  
You lived them through and through in those brief days  
When you stood facing death. They are not lost:  
They rushed together as the waters rush  
From many sources; you had all in one.

You filled your little cup with all experience,  
And drank the golden foam, and left the dregs,  
And tossed the cup away. Why should we mourn  
Your happiness? You burned clear flame, while he  
Who treads the endless march of dusty years  
Grows blind and choked with dust before he dies,  
And dying goes back to the primal dust,  
And has not lived so long in those long years  
As you in your few, vibrant golden months  
When like a spendthrift you gave all you were.

CURTIS READ was tremendously pleased at the prospect of joining 'Di' Gates at the Dunkirk Station. He had to be secretive about it in his letters to his mother and dropped her this artful hint shortly before he packed up at Moutchic, 'If things go well I ought to be leaving some time this month for the station I wrote you about. If you say the names of your second and third sons quite fast you will get the name, starting with the third son's name first.<sup>1</sup> You might think from all this camouflage that the Kaiser gave a ——— where we were. But it is more a matter of principle than of importance where we are.'

His fragmentary diary during these last days on the French coast reveals a certain restless impatience with what seemed to him to be muddle and delay.

Nothing very different from day to day. Talk with Mr. De-Haven about the best method of attacking submarines. The

<sup>1</sup> *Dunc-Curt* (Dunkirk).



CURTIS SEAMAN READ



## CURTIS READ PAYS THE PRICE

dance at the Hotel Manan and bombing practice and Bill Atwater held the center of the stage for the week. Hear we are going to Dunkirk. General nervous tension. Wish I were off, even if I am not thoroughly trained. Can learn at the front. Petty jealousies in camp amusing and pathetic, not to mention out of place. I feel very restless indeed, particularly about Bart. I wish I knew what was best for him to do. He has fine ability. *Wonderful* moon. Am I changing a lot?

One flight. Beautiful weather. Conditions at Moutchic too bad. Delay, impatience, disappointment. Human touches brought out in censoring mail. We are all children, after all.

Officer of the day. No flying. Terribly stupid. Feeling of loneliness.

As usual got all dressed, but no flying for me. Censored mail. How much kindness and real human nature there is hidden under an artificial toughness. What really is the reason for this forced attitude which men assume? 'A man among men' seems to have this failing. The art of gentleness is a great virtue. Gentle but *there*, so to speak. No wonder that men rise to heights of unknown bravery when life is so monotonous, when routine seems to engulf all personality. The suppression of personality in an educated and especially an ambitious man often brings out a mood which is really hostile and unnatural to him.

Rather a philosophical week. Expect orders for the front any day. Guess that is the reason. Feeling of fatalism about April. Odd! Feel that it would really be a climax now if I should have the privilege of giving the greatest sacrifice. Feeling that there is absolutely no other way out.

My philosophy of life. (1) Sincerity. (2) Be *one* man. (3) Do what you are afraid to do. Practice getting into the habit of having something to do. Either that or relaxation. None of this wasting time.

No orders yet. Sounds so excited over nothing. Possibility of going south makes me sick. Bombing the damndest patience-and-will game I ever saw. Much prefer individual action to co-operative action. Which attitude is the right one? Chip's *vrille*. Was sure he was killed. Very lucky, thank God.

Orders for enlisted pilots and observers to proceed to Dunkirk. Ours ought to be there soon. Poor Fid in hard luck. Going to Le Croisic. Fate, perhaps.

Orders have come! ! Am going to leave to-morrow. Evening



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

with the De Havens. Very touching. All very excited, indeed. Promise to say good-bye to them in the morning in their beds.

Mrs. De Haven wakes us early. They say, '*Au revoir, matelot.*' Cook us breakfast and we are off. Say good-bye to Fid. Hate to. Queer feeling that I won't ever see him again, or rather that he won't ever see me.

Curt's last letter to his mother from Moutchic was written on February 18th, the day before he left for Dunkirk via Paris. He told her:

DEAREST BUB:

Your nice *long* letter came yesterday. Please don't ever worry about your letters being too long, they never are.

Our orders came to-day and Bart and I are to be separated. He is going to a station where Henry Landon, Sam Walker and Reggie Coombe are, so it won't be so bad. I am very sorry, though, that we are to be separated. It was very hard luck that he didn't come with me.

I really felt very badly indeed saying *au revoir* to the DeHavens, as they are a fine family and have been awfully good to me. Mr. DeHaven gave me to-night a charm which he wore at the front for three years and which he says is wonderful luck. The chef of his escadrille gave it to him after he had brought down his first Boche. It is supposed to represent the heart of Saint-Michel, who is the patron Saint of all aviators. The Pope originally gave it to the chef of Mr. DeHaven's escadrille. It is sort of an order and about 200 aviators are wearing it at the front now. Out of the 200 that have worn it only one has been killed, so you see how much luck I am going to have. It was very nice of him, wasn't it? Mrs. DeHaven also gave me a picture of herself, signed *de votre mère française. Très gentil, n'est-ce pas?*

I am giving Mr. DeHaven a letter to you and to Dunc because he expects to come over very soon to America. He really is a corker, and I hope you will do everything you can for him when he arrives. He has promised me he will look you up right away. I will send you a picture of him.

Must make this short, Bub, as I am leaving at 6.00 A.M. Just wanted this to get in the mail here before I left. Am going to Paris and will be there three days, then to —?

Lots of love to you all, will have lots to write about from now

## CURTIS READ PAYS THE PRICE

on of interest. Am so glad to be going. Fid and I are both very very well. Take good care of yourself.

He was vastly interested in what he found at the new Dunkirk station and eager to be in readiness to join the patrol. This was to be the culmination of the tedious training to which he had devotedly applied himself. Flying had not been as easy for him to master as for some of his comrades. He confessed that he lacked the genius of the born aviator who found in every flight an intoxicating joy. It had been a duty gladly undertaken, and in this spirit he counted his life as a very little thing. Those brief phrases in his diary illuminate the character of Curtis Read — ‘The art of gentleness is a great virtue . . . gentle, but *there* . . . sincerity . . . do what you are afraid to do.’ This epitomizes the character of a gentleman and the courage of a Sir Galahad.

At Dunkirk he looked forward to meeting and working with several other members of the Unit who were moving heaven and earth to get assignments to this area. For active service it was the most desirable of all the stations operated by U.S. Naval Aviation because of the proximity to the enemy’s lines and the incessant warfare in the air. To be bombed every night was better than the monotonous security of some assembling or instruction base far removed from the front.

Curtis found time to write one letter to his mother from Dunkirk. It was dated the 25th, the day before his death. He was cheery and gossipy, as usual, and everything was fine. His troubles he confided to his diary, but never to the dear ones at home. He was blessedly unaware that this was to be his farewell message. Writing it during that last evening, he had no chance to mail it before he went out for a flight next morning. The letter was found in his pocket and forwarded by his friends, from one ‘who being dead, yet speaketh.’

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

### DEAREST MOTHER:

Well, Bart and I are separated now. I left the school down south and went up to Paris en route here and spent four days there. Saw Bob Lovett, Anna Carrere, and Marguerite Kennelly arrived while I was there. She is driving a car which distributes hospital supplies to the different bases and hospitals in Paris.

This is very interesting and a very active place as we are about twelve or so miles from the front lines of the Boche. Di is up here. Am living in a house with Mose and several other officers. It is rather a queer situation. The French family who own the house only use the cellar so we sleep upstairs and have quite decent rooms. There is so much bombing and shrapnel fire that they prefer to sleep in the cellar, so as we use the rooms at night it is very convenient to have them prefer the cellar, which they have fixed up quite comfortably. The Germans have a fifteen-inch gun they let go every now and then which raises more havoc than anything else, but they confine that to a different sector from where we are living. In fact the French are right next to us and the English not far away. All the houses have sand bags piled around the bases and wherever there is any glass exposed there is always some metal protection to cover it. Our base consists of hangars, shops for repair work, barracks, etc. and dug-outs. The dugouts have iron sheeting V-topped roofs, and layers of iron sheeting and sand bags underneath. They are about thirty feet deep and are electrically lighted, as they are of course permanently built.

Mose bought a beautiful police dog in Paris, and he is great fun and reminds me very much of 'Ella.' Mose is so funny with the dog, he is so serious and takes such wonderful care of him. In Paris we went to tea at the Ritz and Mose took the dog and, coming out, the leash got mixed up with the leg of the table and he broke ten francs' worth of cups before he escaped. I must say the dog behaved wonderfully, though, all the time, especially travelling.

Everything is going finely here and Bart was very well when I left him and I never felt better in my life. Don't for goodness sake worry about us, for we are both as safe as can be. I should hate to come all the way over here and keep a desk chair in Paris warm or some job like that, and what's more you would hate to have me. Got a nice letter from Dunc and am glad to know

## CURTIS READ PAYS THE PRICE

things are going so well down there. That's fine. Are you being good and not reading at night? Will have lots more that is interesting to tell you later on. Do write often. Lots of love to you all and an especial lot for you, Bub. Have everything I need.

Curtis had been only two days at Dunkirk when, on February 26th, he went up for his first practice flight, in a French seaplane which appeared to be in good condition. It was a Donnet-Denhaut, with a 200 h.p. motor. His observer was a lad named Eichelberg who had been with him at Moutchic where they had become accustomed to flying together. Curtis felt a high regard for him. You will find him mentioned in the letters previously quoted. His name occurs more than once in the diary — 'Bombing with "Eich."' Certainly he is an extraordinarily nice man,' and he is evidently referred to in the remark, 'How much kindness and real human nature there is hidden under an artificial toughness.'

It was a difficult, dangerous bit of water to take off from, as has been said — this basin among the Dunkirk docks and quays. However, the seaplane escaped the hazards and rose in the air to fly over the wider spaces where the North Sea makes in to the harbor. 'Di' Gates watched it turn and circle while Curtis Read, the pilot, was familiarizing himself with the controls and the tricks of handling it to the best advantage. Apparently he was having no trouble.

Twenty minutes after the seaplane went up, it crashed into the water, a vertical nose-dive like a falling projectile. This was at 10.20 o'clock in the forenoon. It was impossible to ascertain how it happened and why. The disaster was seen from the station. A launch reached the spot in a few minutes. Curtis was found, still breathing, in the wreckage of the seaplane. Eichelberg had been killed or drowned. His body had vanished and was never recovered.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

They carried Curtis to the French military hospital. The surgeons discovered that he had suffered a compound fracture of the skull. He died at 11.10, less than an hour after the accident.

His sacrifice was as complete as though he had perished in combat. He had given his all. This was the feeling among the Allied naval and military forces in Dunkirk. Ensign Curtis Seaman Read was the first aviator of the U.S. Naval Forces to be killed in France. It was a symbol which inspired distinguished tributes of pride, affection, and esteem. These took the form of a military funeral which a newspaper dispatch described as imposing.

The civil authorities sent a magnificent wreath bearing the inscription, '*To the first American officer who died for France in Dunkirk.*' The coffin which was placed on a gun carriage drawn by six horses, was covered with American and French flags. A number of American officers and delegations from Allied troops attended the funeral. The French Government sent two representatives, General Nollet and Vice-Admiral Ronarc'h.

This brief dispatch inadequately conveys the dignity and pathos of that procession that filed through the silent, shell-torn streets of Dunkirk with its indomitable citizens grouped along the pavements to pay homage. Well they knew what it was for a brave man to die for his country. In front marched an armed escort of American bluejackets and the bugler to blow 'Taps.' Next came the color guard with the Stars and Stripes. An English chaplain preceded the draped and burdened gun carriage. The pall-bearers were Lieutenants Haviland and Gates, Ensigns Loomis, Bassett, Taylor, and de Cernea. It seemed peculiarly fitting that the Second Yale Unit should have had such a representative as gallant 'Eddie' de Cernea. Behind the gun carriage tramped a hundred men and the officers of the American station as mourners, commanded by Lieutenant Chevalier.



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Then came the foreign officials and officers. There were notable figures in this group. General Nollett commanded the 36th French Army Corps. Vice Admiral Ronarc'h directed the operations of the French destroyers, trawlers, mine-sweepers, and other craft which helped to guard the Straits of Dover. A gray-haired Breton sailor, seamed and stubborn and brown, he it was who had commanded the six thousand French sailors and marines at Antwerp, at Dixmude, on other fields of Belgium, during those early weeks of 1914 when the German tide of invasion was but barely stemmed. France honored them greatly, these *fusiliers marins* of Admiral Ronarc'h. Six thousand of them went in and two thousand came back, but they had said, '*They shall not pass*' — and the pledge was kept.

And here was Monsieur Terquem, the Mayor of Dunkirk, and the life and soul of its magnificent endurance! An officer of the Alpine Chasseurs, the 'Blue Devils,' the breast of his blue tunic was adorned with the Legion of Honor and the Cross with a palm. When the city received its decoration, he was also cited in the orders of the Army and of the Nation. A signal honor that had been conferred upon no other mayor of France! Commodore Hubert Lynes of the British Navy, commanding from Dunkirk the squadron of huge monitors that bombarded Ostend and a fleet of destroyers, a man who was cheery and undismayed by the nightly bombardments; Colonel Marescaux, from the British base, Capitaine de Fregate de Laborde, Squadron Commander Welsh, R.N., Lieutenant Delsalle of French Aviation, and many other officers of the British and French Navies and Air Forces.

The services at the grave were in charge of the Reverend P. Sextey, Chaplain to the Forces, Dunkirk. There were many offerings of flowers, including those from the French Aerial Patrol and the Municipality of Dunkirk.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Flowers more lasting and fragrant than these bloomed in the hearts of those who had known Curtis Read — the flowers of memories precious and happy. The qualities which had made him beloved on the campus had made themselves felt in the service. Lieutenant Chevalier expressed this in writing to Mrs. Read:

I and all the officers of the station wish to express our most sincere sympathy to you and yours. It came as a great blow to us all as he had just arrived in our midst and was starting his work here. Your son came to Dunkirk with the finest reports from other stations where he has served and I was very glad to have him with us because boys of his type and calibre are needed here. I cannot properly express my regret at his death.

‘Di’ Gates wrote at once to Curtis’s mother. Better than any one else at the station he could tell her what it meant to lose a comrade of Yale and the Unit.

*February 26, 1918*

DEAR MRS. READ:

The report of Curt’s terrible accident will have preceded this note considerably. While making a flight this morning he fell into the sea. A motor boat picked him up almost immediately and rushed him back to the station but he died almost at once and never regained consciousness after his fall.

To his friends here who were on the scene it was a terrible shock. To you we all extend our deepest sympathies and want you to know that we are all of one accord with you in your great sorrow.

Curt’s wonderful disposition and admirable character gave him very many warm friends. I know of no one who will be as much mourned and missed as will he. Throughout his college life and period in the Navy he had gathered a most devoted crowd of friends. His loss will leave an awful hole everywhere he was known. I have never known a boy with a sweeter or pleasanter disposition. I for one am minus a very wonderful friend and I know there are a good many others in the same boat.

I know that it is impossible to relieve you any in your great sorrow, but only wish that I could do something to help you. There are so many to pick from it certainly seems most cruel that

## CURTIS READ PAYS THE PRICE

a man like Curt had to be the one. His belongings, letters and personal articles will be sent on as soon as possible.

Ensign Charles C. Bassett, Jr., contributed moving details to the story of the funeral in a letter to Mrs. Read.

*February 28, 1918*

I fail absolutely to find words to express the extent of my sorrow because of the loss of dear old 'Curt,' but I know that when he departed from us last Tuesday, we lost one of the best lads in the world, — the kind of man one loves. He had learned his work for the war well and was a fine flier and to be taken off because of an unwieldy machine and unusually tricky air is too unfortunate.

Tuesday, Tuesday night, Wednesday and Wednesday night the officers of this station, 'Art' Gates, Edward de Cernea, Mosely Taylor, William B. Haviland, Ralph Loomis, A. M. Stevens, and I stood watch in turn over 'Curt,' and this morning he was buried with full military honors. Besides the officers and men of our squadron, the French Governor, a French General and Admiral, British Admiral and Colonel, Cord Meyer (Yale '17) 1st Lieut. U.S.A., and many other officers were there. I waited until after the ceremony to write you, because I wanted to tell you all that was done. The cemetery is a rather small one that this terrible war has largely filled, just on the outskirts of Dunkirk, near the Ferncroft Gate.

We did not know your wishes of course as to what you wanted done, so we buried 'Curt' in one of his Naval Flying Corps uniforms, with his Yale sweater underneath and a picture of you in the left hand coat pocket.

Eddie de Cernea (Yale '19) and 'Art' Gates and I made an inventory of all his effects and a copy of this will be sent you with the other effects which are to be shipped to you immediately. We sincerely trust that everything arrives safely and that they are arranged as you would want them. I enclose in this letter a little flower which I thought you might want. I do send you my deepest sympathy, Mrs. Read.

Bartow Read obtained leave to visit Dunkirk from his own station at Le Croisic and 'to do what he could in behalf of the family.' He found that 'Di' Gates and Lieuten-

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

ant Chevalier had 'done everything that could be thought of' and had sent all the information in their letters to Mrs. Read. On his way back to Le Croisic, Bartow wrote from Paris:

So, Mother, remember that you are one of a great class of mothers who have lost their dearest possessions on behalf of our great cause and remember also that having done so you must try to bear your loss as bravely as those other heroic mothers of soldiers and sailors. This is a great task for any one and I know you will be able to bear it in the same courageous way that you have already borne great losses. Your part in the war is infinitely harder than ours, but you must bear in mind that your sons must do their share, and that one of them is on the ever increasing list of those entitled to the admiration of all. I am sending you a duplicate of Curt's identification photo taken in France lately. Be brave and remember that you are a hero among Americans.

The wonderfully fine story of Guynemer by Henry Bordeaux was published by the Yale University Press in 1918 in a memorial edition inscribed to Ensign Curtis Seaman Read. The cost was provided from the fund raised among his fellow members of Scroll and Key. In reading Bartow's letters one finds displayed a spirit akin to that in the following paragraph from the book:

Friendship among airmen is manly and seemingly careless, not caring for formulas or appearances, but proving itself by deeds. To these men the games of war are astonishingly like school games, and are spoken of as nothing else. When a comrade has not come back, and dinner has to begin without him, no show of sorrow is tolerated; only these young men's hearts feel the absence of a friend, and the casual visitor, not knowing, might take them for sportsmen, lively and jolly.

Thus it was that Bartow wrote from Le Croisic:

DEAR MOTHER:

All of Curt's effects have already been sent to you by the Navy people. An inventory has to be made in such cases and 'Di'



## CURTIS READ PAYS THE PRICE

Gates did all that. I am not and was not assigned to the same station as Curt. I spent two days there and did everything I could. I am going to have a stone placed there to permanently mark the spot. 'Di' has already ordered the stone. I am now several hundred miles south of Dunkirk at a very quiet patrol station. We have plenty of flying and lots of ships to convoy, but no submarines even reported in the vicinity.

The other day, April Fool's Day, I was out on patrol and had to land on account of motor trouble. My observer and I had a bet about seasickness and I won. He was sick and I wasn't. The sea was very rough and we made very slow progress getting in on a tow line. We were just about getting hungry enough to eat our emergency ration when a crate of oranges came peacefully drifting past on the ocean. We ate about a dozen apiece, I sitting on the top plane catching the oranges thrown back to me by the crew of the motor boat on the other end of the tow-line. It was a great game. April Fool's Day I spent the morning from daylight till lunch time flying, landing and being towed in. Sort of fooled me that time. We have a great system now — a machine can't get lost the way 'Ken' Smith did.

Well, Bub, this station is absolutely safe and very pleasant, so don't worry about me. I am not within range of any Boche that isn't a prisoner, and those are very carefully guarded. Incidentally I have a hunch and my hunches are usually pretty good, that I will live to come home with the rest when business of stepping on the Boche is finished, and I think that will be about one year from to-day at the most.

We have an officers' baseball team here and tennis and soon we will be all swimming. Well, Bub, I'll have to stop. Be brave and proud of Curt who was brave, and don't worry about me.

One way to know a man is to know him through the friends he made. In the intimate association of the Unit, there was no room for idle praise or soothing flattery. There was merit in all the 'razzing' that went on. It was like a wholesome breeze to blow away any bluff and pretences. And the crowd knew each other just about as each man really was. They learned Curtis Read's philosophy of life as he noted it in his diary, '*Sincerity.*' '*Be one man*' and not an imitation of others.



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

And so there is truth and candor in what the living had to say about the one who swiftly passed beyond horizons unseen while on duty at Dunkirk. It seems strange and yet somehow appropriate that the first news should have come to Mrs. Read in a telegram from Trubee Davison. The message from the Navy Department was delayed in transmission. Trubee said, in part:

Your consolation is that there never lived a nobler, finer or better beloved man. It seems too much to bear, but we all pray for you in your sorrow and we glory in our love and admiration for Curt. He died as noble a death as even he could have desired.

From Le Croisic Reginald Coombe wrote:

MY DEAR MRS. READ:

The sad news of Curt's death reached us here yesterday, and was a terrible shock to us all, who knew, loved and admired him. How much greater a shock it is to you and how much harder to bear, I can only imagine, and I want to offer you my very deepest sympathy.

Though I had not seen him since Christmas, when I spent two very wonderful days with him, it is hard to realize that he has gone. His memory will always remain, however, and I will think of him as the sincerest, most loved and admired of all my friends. I was fortunate enough to come to know him intimately, especially during our last year at college and while at Palm Beach and Huntington; from his friendship I gained much which I will never forget. His loss will be a great blow to the college society of which he became a member last spring and in which he took so great an interest.

A word about Bart, which will be of interest to you, I know. Bart was with us here when the news of Curt's accident came in. The way in which he bore up under the shock and continued with his work has gained for him the admiration of all the officers and men of this station and have shown him to have the qualities which made his brother what he was. Bart is now on leave for a few days; when he returns, we will take the best possible care of him.

With sincerest sympathy to you all in your great loss and with kindest regards.

## CURTIS READ PAYS THE PRICE

Sam Walker was in this same group on the French coast to which Bartow belonged. In simple words he was able to accentuate the salient points of Curtis's character.

DEAR MRS. READ:

Yesterday we were all jarred by the sad news that brought the reality of war into our very midst. I know how you must feel at the loss of Curt, and your feelings are shared by the vast number of Curt's friends, for everywhere he went he left behind him an impression of sincerity and he won the confidence of many by his interests and sympathy in their affairs. I have heard him talk at New Haven and hold the attention of a large gathering of men by his quiet manner.

The way in which he died makes us all go about our work with a soberer and more determined way fighting for the same cause.

All of his friends sympathize in your great loss.

John Vorys had gone home from Felixstowe, grieving over the death of 'Al' Sturtevant. He knew what it was to be bereft of a dear companion by the pitiless fatalities of war. He wrote from Hampton Roads where Curtis had tarried before going overseas.

DEAR MRS. READ:

I returned to this country two weeks ago, and although I had heard rumors, I did not hear the news definitely about Curt until I saw the Davisons in New York. You can't realize how I felt, because I don't believe you knew how I cared for Curt. The rumors I heard in London about an accident to Curt were so conflicting that I still hoped the whole thing was untrue, and it made me feel pretty badly to hear that another of our wonderful Huntington Unit had gone out. I had heard through letters from Moutchic that Curt was one of the specially picked pilots sent to Dunkirk, and knew that with a start like that, for the privilege of going there was one that every Naval pilot was fighting for, he would do things to make us all proud. Of course we can't all get out of this safely, but what depresses me about this is that it had to be Curt and that he had to go so soon. Still, we mustn't feel that his sacrifice was futile, because he did a splendid job, in this flying especially, while he lived, and his death is just one more thing to make us Americans set our backs to it and make sure we won't quit until it's finished the right way.

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I'm stationed at Hampton Roads now, training pilots for war flight duty. Harry Davison told me that, some time before hearing of Curt's death, one of the boys here said: 'You know, Curt was, after all, the best loved pilot ever on the station.' I'd give a lot to have that said of me, especially as it was said before his death. They all here seem to have loved Curt and felt his loss deeply. His picture is in the ward-room, — the only picture in the room.

'Lotta' Lawrence was at Fort Worth, Texas, when the news reached him.

DEAR MRS. READ:

Just a line to try and tell you how dreadfully I feel about the death of Curt. I consider it one of the greatest privileges of my life to have known him and to have been counted among his friends. He was a leader among us and a boy we all looked up to and loved dearly, and his death is a hard one to bear. New Haven will never be the same without Curt, if it is ever our fortune to gather there again. We will miss him everywhere. It certainly is up to the rest of us to try and carry out his influence, which was one of the finest I have ever known.

My plans are rather indefinite in matter of time. Some time in April I hope to sail for France. Just at present Allan Ames and I are taking the R.F.C. Aerial Gunnery Course here. Frank Lynch finished the course just ahead of us, but will go over with us. We finish here next week and will go North and I hope on leave until we sail. But they may hold us in Washington on temporary duty. I do hope I will see you before I go. My best to Dunc.

This is a pretty feeble attempt to give my feelings on the loss of Curt, but they are more than I can write down.

Allan Ames was also at Fort Worth. He wrote:

DEAR MRS. READ:

Nothing I can write will express my heartfelt sympathy for you. I always counted Curt as one of my dearest and closest friends. The impression that his strong, beautiful character made on me and the nearness of his personality makes me think that it cannot be.

The wonderful spirit you have shown has given us all increased faith and strength.

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Harry Davison wrote from Norfolk

DEAR MRS. READ:

Just a line of sympathy to let you know how I and all the other men of this station feel for you in your great sorrow. Inasmuch as I lived with Curtis for eight months, I felt that I knew him pretty well, and I can truthfully say from the bottom of my heart that I have never learned to love and respect another fellow as I have Curt.

All the time that he was here at this station, he was the life and spirit of the entire camp. Not over a week ago I heard one of the men say that of all the officers who had ever been at this station, Curt Read was the most beloved and worshipped.

There is some consolation that he died for his country, and I think Curt's great regret would be that he did not get a chance at the enemy first. If we could only do a fraction of what Curt has done, we would be satisfied.

Of the letters of condolence written by the members of the Unit, the foregoing will suffice to express what all of them thought of Curtis Read. Colonel Thompson held the same opinions. His heart was wrung. Two of those splendid 'young ducks' of his gone in the same month! If it were unsigned I think you would recognize this message as coming from him.

DEAR MRS. READ:

When we came home today there were some telegrams telling us of the awful news about Curtis. I have never been so stunned and shocked. I loved that little fellow as if he were my own and never have I seen as noble and gallant a person as he. Only the other day, Mr. Davison asked Trubee and me who it was that we thought was the finest character in our organization, and with no hesitation we both said Curt Read. It is so dreadful. I am sick at heart and mad clean through. My deepest and most affectionate sympathy.

Yours ever

L. S. THOMPSON

Curtis was fondly remembered wherever he went in France. 'Eddie' de Cernea reminds us of the sojourn at Moutchic in one of his letters.

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DEAR MRS. READ:

I was very happy to have your letter and the picture of Curtis just as we knew him — true and fine and splendid in everything. You are so tremendously brave about it all — just as he would want most. Mothers are such very wonderful people. I have been saving some little pictures to send to you, and I am sure you will like to have them, even if they aren't very good. Most of them were taken at Moutchic, where we are at the house of Lieutenant DeHaven. They were such delightful people and they thought of Curt as one of their own children.

John Farwell had more of this to say in writing a letter with all the news that he thought might interest Trubee.

I have just come back from a trip to Moutchic. While I was there I had dinner with a French family. The husband is an old French flier and attached to the station to be of what assistance he can. He spoke of instructing Stuffy Spencer, George Moseley, and others of the Lafayette Escadrille. After dinner we went into the living room and on the walls were pictures of Curt, Steve Potter, and several others of the First and Second Units. Around Curt's picture was a wreath of fresh flowers. When the mother saw that I noticed the picture, she asked me if I knew him, and then brought another photograph that Curt had given her, on which was written 'To my French mother.' She wept as she spoke of him, and of how fond of him she had become. You might tell this to Mrs. Read, for I think she would like to know, for his French friends are mourning him just as sincerely as his American friends.

In Paris I saw Prof. Clarence Mendell who had seen Curt on the way to Dunkirk. He said that he had told him he never would be a flier, that he could not 'get the hang of it.' At Moutchic they said the same thing, and that he himself had expected to be killed. However, the smash itself must have been entirely accidental.

Clarence Mendell recalled this meeting with Curtis and told Mrs. Read:

George Nettleton, I know, has written you to tell you how much we have been sympathizing with you these last days. It is very little that a letter, and especially a letter from a stranger,



## CURTIS READ PAYS THE PRICE

can do at such a time, but I want just to tell you how splendidly Curtis faced the possibility of just what came to him. He was here with us on his way to the front, and while he had the same cheerfulness that all the men, particularly the aviators had, it seemed to me that he had a more serious realization of the possibilities. I think he absolutely knew how great the chances of accident were and I know that he faced them with that knowledge absolutely without faltering. He had a magnificent spirit and his example will surely be a very great inspiration to the other men for a long while to come. That is perfectly clear from the way that they have already spoken of him. He was always a splendid fellow and especially in this last undertaking and you have much to be proud of in the midst of the terrible sorrow.

Ensign Charley Fuller had been with Curtis at Hampton Roads. He added the following tribute, a most admirable portrayal of his lost friend's character and personality:

DEAR MRS. READ:

I wanted to wait until the whole thing had finished, and we had finally won, before writing to you about Curt. I wanted to do this because I thought you would like to know that his friends are thinking of him to-day, with the war a memory, just as much as we thought of him when we were still fighting. I believe Curt was the best friend and the most intimate that I have ever had, though I did not know him very long.

Curt came down to Hampton Roads during the last days of August, 1917, and from that time on I got to know him and love him just as every other man he ever came in contact with did. I followed him over to France, coming about a month later, and very nearly joined him at Moutchic. I wish I had. Instead, I was sent to England, was there when the news came, and have been there ever since. A short time ago Allan Ames came over, and he showed me Curt's letters, and the letters written to you after his death. They all showed how he was loved — you didn't like Curt, you loved him. I don't feel there is much I can add, but perhaps you would like to hear a little more fully of Curt's life in Norfolk.

When he came, at the end of August, he found ten of us students, pretty well disgusted with life. We didn't have decent

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

machines or enough men — and we had poor food and bad living-quarters. The result was that we were not the best lot to take in hand — but Curt of course went at it in the simplest and most human way — his own way. That is, he took off his coat and started to work. With all his working though there wasn't the least bit of telling us to get to work too — it was all done by force of example. Of course he started us going too, and kept us going with his wonderful sunny humour and kindness. Things weren't running anything like right for nearly two months, but during all that time Curt was just working and being so kind that it brought a lump in your throat. Curt was a poor disciplinarian, for he trusted everybody, but there were very few of the enlisted men even who tried to take advantage of him. Curt's trust in others was well expressed by one of the boys there:

'Curt is the one friend I have, who I know would welcome me if I went to hell and back.'

That's the sort of reputation he had at the end of a couple of months. I saw a great deal of him personally, and I can never forget the many long talks we had together. He used to sleep at the barracks one night a week, and on those nights we used to walk out in the reservation. I can't say exactly what we talked about — the usual things perhaps. Books, girls, love, religion, ambition. Curt met me half way. I remember his saying that he did not understand a man who didn't meet you half way. I learned Curt's point of view then, his very deep religious feeling, and his deep sense of responsibility. We used to argue a good deal about love, and I shall never forget Curt's beautiful, quixotic point of view — it has been a help to me many times since. It was absurd of course — he sincerely felt that a girl whom he loved he would never ask to marry him because he wasn't fit for her — but it is only from great purity and self-forgetfulness that a man can speak like that. We had many long talks and they all showed those great qualities of love and unselfishness that Curt had more than any other boy I have ever known.

Presently I got my commission, and from then on I saw a little less of Curt privately. We used to dine at the Monticello, or at the Country Club, and Curt with Doc McAlpin used to be leading spirits there, — they both had a good sense of humour. Curt was generous, as you know, to the point of folly. He used to lend his car or his room or his money — he would have lent the shirt off his back if anybody had asked him for it.

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We all had a happy time down there together, and Curt was loved by every single man, — even by the pariah, a most unattractive boy from Maine, because Curt went out of his way to be kind to him. We played together as a crowd, and worked together — and I remember those days as very happy ones, when we used to go racing out of Norfolk on a cold morning in the Marmon — and the dances at the Country Club — and Curt is the person I remember with more happiness and reverence than anyone else down there. He never failed in kindness or good spirits, and he never failed to go out of his way to be kind — that was almost the greatest thing about him.

I only saw him once again, in New York when he dined with us. He left a few days afterward.

You don't need any summary of Curt's qualities — but remember that his fineness and unselfishness were not lost. He had an almost perfect life I think — he lived it almost perfectly anyway. I believe that the truest immortality, is the immortality of memory. Through all my life, as through the past eight months, Curt's memory will always be with me. He is the greatest inspiration I have. His memory cannot die among his friends, and their lives will be so much the cleaner and sweeter for having known Curt, — don't forget that.

*(From the New York World, March 4, 1918)*

MIAMI, FLA., *March 3.* — Mrs. W. A. Read of Purchase, N.Y., whose son Curtis was killed recently in action, today gave out this letter she had received from Major Gen. Bell:

'You will doubtless recall our chance encounter at a military equipment store where your son was securing apparel for use in the Aviation Corps of the navy, your casual mention of another son in the same service and my expression of surprise that you had given two sons to such hazardous duty. Thereupon you quietly remarked that you had given four, all you had. The calm resignation and satisfaction of duty done so pathetically manifest in your face and manner, moved me profoundly and I went straightway to secure a four-starred service flag to lay at your feet.

'I found that more than three-starred flags were not kept, ready made, and I had to order one especially made, which I am sending to you herewith. Won't you accept this small tribute to the spirit of self-sacrifice and patriotic devotion with which a noble mother has thus answered the call of her country?

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'Were every mother equal to meeting such calls with the same spirit there could never be the slightest doubt about the safety of democracy. In thus tendering this token of obeisance, I feel I am but signalizing the universal sentiment of all my fellow men and women acquainted with your exceptional act of abnegation. I trust you will place it in a portion of your home you occupy most, that it may be a constant reminder that your sacrifices are not without appreciation.

'I also trust that every one of your sons may at the end of this world-wide calamity return safely to your fireside, ennobled by honor and glory of having unselfishly served their fellow men and each with a record of many deeds which can never cease to be a source of pride and gratification to his parents. May God grant you this recompense for the sacrificing spirit you have so nobly shown, for the poignant anxiety by which your mother's heart must long be afflicted!

'With much pride in the fact that you are my countrywoman, it is a great honor to ascribe myself,

'Very truly and sincerely yours,

'F. J. Bell, *Major General, U.S.A.*'

In giving to The World at this time Gen. Bell's letter, Mrs. Read said, 'It is with the feeling that when the time has arrived, as it now has, for America to share the anguish and glory of the Allies, such an utterance from one of our war-trained leaders belongs to all mothers of the men who so superbly and gladly gave their lives to the great cause in which our beloved country is enlisted.

'To the men, as well, it must mean much to know that one so burdened with the grim responsibility of hardening them for war service should pause to express such appreciation of the cost to their families of living up to their soldiers' heroic example.'

It was Mrs. Read's desire that the body of her son should rest undisturbed in the French cemetery at Dunkirk. She made her pilgrimage to the spot as soon as possible after the war and found that the people of the city regarded the grave as hallowed by the sacrifice of the young American officer who had died in the cause of France. It was cared for with sentimental affection and reverence. It enriched the heroic traditions of Dunkirk and was a tie



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to bind her memories to those of the republic beyond the sea.

It disturbed Mrs. Read to learn that the American Government had other plans for its patriot dead in France and she therefore addressed a letter to a staunch friend of the Unit, Commander J. H. Towers in the Navy Department.

DEAR SIR:

My son Wm. A. Read, Ens. U.S.N.R.F. of Naval Aviation, writes me from Washington that the Navy Department is planning to bring home the bodies of our men fallen in performance of their war duty abroad — in consideration of their families here.

It is my present feeling in which my sons Wm. A., Jr., and Duncan concur, that it seems a more fitting and honored resting-place for the body of my beloved son Curtis S. Read, Ensign, U.S.N.R.F., killed at Dunkirk on February 26th, 1918, to remain in the cemetery at Dunkirk where it was laid with every military and civil honor and reverent ceremony, than to be transferred from the fellowship of the war's heroic dead.

Will you be kind enough to inform me whether my request that no change should be made by the Navy Department, would make it impossible to obtain permission some years later to remove my son's body, should my family wish to do so, and whether you desire a more formal expression of our wishes than this letter.

Appreciating the courtesy and consideration accorded my family by the Navy Department, during my four sons' service during the war,

I am

Sincerely yours

CAROLINE S. READ

Commander Towers, quick to sympathize with the spirit of this petition, forwarded it to the proper bureau with the following endorsement:

It is recommended that the request contained in the within letter be given favorable consideration, provided it does not seriously conflict with the definitely established policy of the



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Bureau. In view of the fact that the writer of this letter, Mrs. Wm. A. Read, has furnished four sons, all of whom have qualified as officers in the Naval Reserve Fying Corps, it is believed that her request is entitled to special consideration.

It was decided by the American Government that all of its heroic dead should be removed from scattered resting-places and gathered together in cemeteries of their own, there to remain in the consecrated soil of France unless their kinsfolk should desire to have them brought home. Curtis Read sleeps in the American cemetery at Boni, near Saint-Quentin, in the Department of the Aisne.

## CHAPTER XLI

### PETULANT PILGRIMS TO ITALY

Aviatóre he fly th' Caproni;  
*Maladito!* Machina is phony!  
He go up for a hop,  
*Por Baccho!* She flop!  
An' il bimbo he breaka da bōñ.

Pilóta say 'In God we trusta,  
Because this damn-thing she go busta!'  
Milan and La Roma?  
There's no place like homa!  
Aviatóre feel sad an' he cussed-a!

From the serenade '*O, Mia Nosediva*'

By GIUSEPPE SPIRALA  
W.A.G. Corps of Italy

Arranged for orchestral  
accompaniment of guitars,  
bass and gasoline drums,  
saxophones and magnetos.

THE Italian adventure impaired the tempers of several of the best-natured members of the Unit. There was sunshine on the landscape but none in their hearts. Their language leads one to conclude that among the most ignoble works of mankind since the dawn of creation was the big Caproni plane equipped with Fiat motors. This they blame for the failure of the Northern Bombing Group to function as expected. The only person to remain quite sane and unruffled was 'Eddie' McDonnell. And he is unique to-day in that he can speak of the Capronis without getting red in the face. He calls your attention to the fact that eight of them actually did fly over the Alps and reach their destination. As the officer in charge of getting them there, he made the best of a bad bargain. It was not his fault that the machines failed to do what was expected of them. Promise and performance disagreed.

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His explanation of the circumstances in which the Capronis were taken over as an emergency measure is well worth inclusion in this part of the Unit history:

In February, 1918, when I was a member of the staff of Captain Cone, I was ordered to Italy, after visiting several French stations, to inspect the Italian aircraft with the idea of possible purchases for our naval operations in European waters. At that time the idea of the Northern Bombing Group to bomb German submarine bases in Belgium was beginning to find favor with Captain Cone and his staff in Paris.

After inspecting several Italian aeroplane factories and sea-plane stations, I devoted the greater part of my time to the study of bombing operations and bombing planes. I had a number of interviews with Signor Caproni and made a detailed inspection of his factory, also making several flights in Caproni planes. During one of these flights with an Italian officer we looped the loop in a three-motor Caproni which seemed to me quite a demonstration for a large plane of this type.

The Caproni then in use was a so-called 450 driven by three 150 h.p. Isotta-Fraschini motors. This plane was easily maneuvered and in addition was capable of carrying a load of 1000 pounds in bombs to an altitude of 15,000 feet. The motors and planes were very reliable and had made excellent records at the Italian front. I secured permission to fly from Milan to the front where I was temporarily attached to one of the Caproni squadrons near Padua. I discussed these planes with a number of Italian officers who were actually flying at the front and I also took part as front cockpit gunner in a raid on a German Gotha squadron located behind the Austrian lines near Pordonone. The operation of the plane and the motor seemed to be perfect. On my return from this expedition I discussed with Signor Caproni his new type, the 600 h.p. of the same general design, to be motored with three 270 h.p. Fiat motors with a total actual horse power of about 800. This was called the 600 Caproni.

While I personally made no exhaustive tests of these planes, it seemed to me that in the press of circumstances we would be fairly safe in recommending the purchase of these new planes as the Fiat factory had an international reputation certainly of a satisfactory nature, and the new planes, according to actual test figures, would carry 1800 to 2000 pounds of bombs to a height of

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at least 15,000 feet, in addition to which they had a speed of 105 miles an hour and were quite maneuverable.

My favorable impressions were confirmed by conferences with a British aviation officer in Milan from which I discovered that the British Naval Air Service was purchasing large numbers of the new 600 Fiat Caproni for their own bombing operations. When I considered this, in view of the fact that the British Government was turning out its own Handley-Page heavy bombers, the new 600 Fiat Caproni which was then in actual production seemed to me to be a very good proposition for us, as the original 450 Isotta-Fraschini Caproni had an excellent record in actual service.

On my return to France I was sent out to the northern front and attached to No. 7 Handley-Page Squadron, R.N.A.S., where I made some night raids both as front and rear gunner over Bruges and also further south when the German army started its big push in March. As a result of this experience the 600 Capronis seemed to me to have the following advantages over the Handley-Pages:

Greater ceiling with full load, about 15,000 feet as compared with 10,000. Greater speed, about 100 to 105 miles an hour compared with 75 or 80. Greater safety factor in case of motor failure, the Caproni with a light load being able to fly with two of the three motors whereas the Handley-Page could not maintain altitude with single motor when one motor failed.

The disadvantage of the Caproni, as compared with the Handley-Page, as it appeared at that time, was a much less rugged construction. This presented an element of danger when roughly used or hit by shell fire. Also the Capronis were inferior in protection from the rear, where they had a more limited arc of gunfire.

I submitted these ideas and observations to the staff in London and was sent back to the United States as Admiral Sims's representative to procure material and personnel for the Northern Bombing Group. The final decision on the Caproni was not made as the result of my investigation. Instead, a commission of which Lieutenant Guggenheim and, I believe, Lieutenant-Colonel Spencer Gray, R.A.F., were members went to Italy and it is my understanding that on the basis of the final report made by these officers Capronis were ordered, the idea being that heavy bombing planes were badly needed. The final

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action taken was to order both Capronis and Handley-Pages.

Subsequent experience proved that the Fiat Capronis were a failure due almost entirely to poor design and workmanship of the Fiat motors. The Isotta-Fraschini factory consistently refused to attempt a larger production than they could handle and at the same time maintain a high standard of quality. The Fiat factory attempted a tremendous expansion in an endeavor to imitate American large production methods. For this the Italians were not properly equipped, either in respect of machinery or skilled personnel. Crank-shafts were not properly machined, gaskets were left out of the cam-shaft housing. A very poor carbureter, of Fiat design, was adopted and this was largely responsible for the great fire risk in these planes. Also an old type American Dixie magneto, bought cheaply in this country in large quantities, was used and turned out to be absolutely inadequate. Besides these glaring faults, the entire workmanship of the motor was of very poor quality. Signor Caproni himself finally acknowledged the truth of all this, so I am informed, and the Italian officers also told us later that they regarded these planes as far inferior to the earlier types. The chief fault was found with the motor although the planes themselves did not appear to be as well designed as those of the 450 Capronis.

Because of the urgent need of these machines to assist the plans of the Northern Bombing Group, it was decided to try to fly them from Milan to our field at St. Inglevert. The first five or six planes were flown by Army ferry pilots. Meanwhile a number of Naval Aviation officers, including Coombe and Walker, were ordered to Italy for instruction in Capronis so that we might replace the Army pilots and ferry our own planes. Under the agreement with the Army, all land machines from whatever source were received by the Army and then turned over to the Navy. Major La Guardia was the Army representative with whom we had to deal and his handling of the situation was so unsatisfactory that he was relieved of this duty, being replaced by Major Glendenning.

About the time of the first ferry flights by Army pilots, I had returned to France and reported to Captain Hanrahan. He ordered me to Italy with several other officers and I was senior officer in charge of the second flight of planes to be flown to France by naval pilots. Harry Davison and Kenneth Smith were



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with me and we made the trip to Milan together. Several of the naval officers who had preceded us to Italy had made the flight over the Alps as second pilots with Army aviators and then returned to become first pilots in ferrying more planes. Being senior naval officer on the spot, I took charge of this work which included at the time about six planes.

Harry Davison was assigned as a pilot with Lieutenant McCormick who had made the trip before. He was a member of the Second Yale Unit which had trained at Buffalo. I was the pilot of another machine and Kenneth Smith was with me as second pilot. Coombe and Walker were pilots of two other planes. The first hop was from Milan to Turin which most of us made without much difficulty. At Turin every machine had serious motor troubles. Some people thought there was sabotage although we had no concrete evidence. On this flight, McCormick and Davison piloted one of the first planes to make a successful trip to St. Inglevert which included the passage over the Alps from Turin to Lyons, three ranges of mountains about 11,000 feet high being in the path.

Of seventeen planes, eight were delivered safely, and five pilots were killed in this enterprise. In our plane alone we changed one motor, one radiator, one carbureter and eight magnetos, and had four motor failures in the air. We made one leg of the journey, from Dijon to Paris, with a broken down magnetos on one of the motors.<sup>1</sup>

It has been told how jubilantly the members of the Unit at Le Croisic and Île Tudy welcomed the prospect of joining this Northern Bombing Group which proposed to erase Ostend and Zeebrugge from the map of Belgium and gloat over the ruins thereof. It was quite obvious to

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER EDWARD O. McDONNELL, U.S.N.

Period 1 January to 12 January, 1920:

A valuable young officer whose resignation is a distinct loss to the service.

S.S. CRAVEN, *Captain U.S.N.*  
*Director of Aviation*

Period 14 April to 31 December, 1919:

A very valuable, courageous and intelligent young officer with a brilliant future.

S.S. CRAVEN, *Capt., U.S.N.*  
*Director of Aviation*

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Lieutenant Robert Lovett that the scheme was sure to fizzle out unless it had the active support of the Wags. These stars of the first magnitude naturally felt surprised that they had to be asked to be taken in on it instead of being absolutely the first choice. Walker does not hesitate to say, 'We heard that ten pilots had been sent to England for training on Handley-Pages and we knew the movement was on foot. We were very much disappointed not to have been among these as many of them were just over from the States and at this time we considered ourselves veterans among the American naval aviation officers in Europe.'

However, the Wags were always magnanimous so they refrained from cabling complaints to Washington which might have injured the prestige of Lieutenant Lovett, Chief Politician and Senior Grand Wag. Leaving Kenneth Smith in Paris where Headquarters had grabbed him and tied him by one leg despite his loud shrieks, Coombe, Walker, and Landon entrained for Italy on June 10th. They spent three weary days in the train, sitting up all night, and were not their merry selves when they rolled out in Rome where Lieutenant Callan met them with kind words. He was an old friend, having been at Moutchic and Le Croisic through the autumn of 1917, and was now in command of the American aviation forces in Italy. He informed these pilgrims that they were to be sent to the Caproni School at Malpensa where, if they survived the course, they would take the new machines from the factory and fly them to France. After that, the big bombing stuff under Captain Hanrahan! All of which 'listened grand!'

Two days were spent in seeing the sights of Rome under the hospitable guidance of Lieutenant Callan. It was extremely hot weather and they felt like Roman ruins. 'We dragged ourselves through the dusty old Forum and the Coliseum with our tongues hanging out and panting,'

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says Walker. They were waiting for a batch of ten ensigns whom they were to command, but these incipient admirals became somehow mislaid en route and failed to show up for three days. Reginald Coombe was unlucky enough to be bowled over by a malady then strange to Rome, which turned out to be the flu. He was quite ill and had to be left behind.

So two of the three Uniteers took the ten ensigns in tow and proceeded to Malpensa, the Italian camp at Gallarate. Coombe was able to join them about a week later. He rather liked the camp which was the largest training school in Italy with three hundred officers under instruction. It occupied a spacious farm three quarters of an hour from Milan by electric cars. Let Reginald describe the place and what was done there with 'Signor Caproni's Flying Coffins':

We were quartered with the Italian officers and lived under the same rules and regulations. Everything was very clean and comfortable and after we had become accustomed to the peculiar schedule, things went along very smoothly. Flying began at 5.30 in the morning and continued until 10.30 when luncheon was served. At eleven o'clock Taps was blown and all hands turned in to sleep until four in the afternoon. Then they flew again till dark, which meant nine or ten o'clock in the long summer twilights. The idea was to dodge the intense heat of the middle of the day, but it seemed to waste a lot of time which might have been used for theoretical work.

The scheme of instruction at Malpensa was devised to equip a man to act as second pilot over the front lines. It was in no sense of the word a thorough finishing course such as was given in the British schools. In the Italian program a pupil would be sent up in the three types of Caproni machines, the 300, the 450, and the 600 h.p., soloing successfully in each and earning the three separate brevets, the test consisting of climbing to 2000 metres, staying there forty-five minutes, and coming down and landing at the aerodrome with dead motors.

This was followed by one lesson in night flying and two solo night flights, with another brevet. In this case the test was to

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climb 2000 metres for half an hour. A little bombing from altitudes of 1000, 1500, and 2000 metres was also given.

Compared with the British system this seemed like a smattering of the things an experienced pilot had to be versed in. However, the Italians figured on sending their graduate pilots to the front to act as second pilots with men who knew the game. Promotion and experience would be gained in actual war flights.

We went through this course of instruction and found it easy, with not much to do. The Capronis, although unstable, were not hard to fly. The chief difficulty at Malpensa was to get your flights in. The Italians were in no hurry about anything. '*Domani*,' to-morrow, was the word. They seemed to think us a bit crazy for being in such a blazing hurry to get through with it.

The aerodrome was about the finest I have ever seen — an enormous field some three miles square — and all of it good for landing. Of course many machines were in the air at one time, but there was room for all of them. Night landings were guided by means of searchlights which were better than flares.

The Caproni experimental station was about two miles away, an interesting place to visit. The most extraordinary plane then building for trial was a giant triplane with three 700 h.p. Fiat motors. We also saw the Liberty motor for the first time, three of them just received from the United States to be installed in a Caproni. This machine was tried out while we were at Malpensa and made fine records. Signor Caproni himself showed us over the station with great pride. We could have told him more about his machines had we met him later.

There were about thirty American officers at Malpensa, Army and Navy, and all living together with the Italian officers. On the Fourth of July the eagle screamed. There was a big celebration in Milan in honor of the United States. The program opened with a reception at the house of the American consul, Mr. Winship, which was attended by the Allied military and diplomatic representatives. We American officers scored a hit. You might call it an ovation. In the evening there was an impressive demonstration in the Piazza del Duomo, in front of the famous Milan cathedral. The great square was thronged with the populace waiting to greet the American official delegation which appeared on a balcony and made long-winded speeches. The cheers and the enthusiasm were really tremendous. Having survived the oratory, the crowd sang American anthems and wildly



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paraded behind three or four bands. The evening wound up with a performance of 'Madame Butterfly' with flag-draped boxes for the bravissimo American officers. We made an entrance in the middle of the first act and the whole house rose to greet us. After the opera came a brilliant ball. I went home. All that publicity and hero-worship had shot my well-known diffidence to pieces.

Sam Walker's<sup>1</sup> attitude toward aviation in Italy was more critical. The environment appears to have rubbed his sensitive nature the wrong way. His notes of a traveler hint that all was not well with the world, for he informs us:

Our first impressions of Gallarate were pleasant. Things were cheaper than in France and we were very enthusiastic, which kept our spirits up. It was not long however, before our attitude changed and a few days of the food at the Italian camp so disgusted us in that beautiful, sunny land that we felt quite different. And we couldn't agree with the Italians as to their methods of instruction and the lack of eagerness they showed for flying. Perhaps this was because so many of them were killed in practice. In thirty days they made a record of wiping out forty men!

American Army pilots were coming to this same school and

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

Period 1 April to 10 June, 1918:

This officer (Ensign Samuel S. Walker) has served at this station since November 1, 1917, and has most efficiently performed all duties assigned to him, which include seaplane pilot — 7½ months. Chief pilot — 1 month. Repair officer — 1 month. Intelligence officer — 2 months. Executive officer — 1 month. He has shown himself to be an officer of rare good judgment, cool headed in emergencies, efficient and skilful in flight and most capable of performance of all work at hand.

W. M. CORRY, *Lt. U.S.N.,  
N.A.S., Le Croisic, France*

Period 15 August to 30 September, 1918:

This officer has performed his duties as commanding officer of the draft of officer pilots under instruction at Malpasa, Italy, on Caproni machines in an excellent manner. His reports have been very good and have always been accurate. He has maintained discipline at all times and had the respect of the officers under him. He is an excellent pilot and flew from Milan, Italy, to Paris, France, acting as first pilot on a 600 H.P. Caproni Aeroplane. Excellent officer material for aviation.

S. CALLAN, *Lt. Cdr. U.S.N.R.F.,  
N.A.S. in Italy*



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

using the machines to which we were assigned. Their commanding officer was Major LaGuardia who was a native son. He could talk the Wop lingo so fast that none of us could get onto what he was talking about. Consequently when we heard a hot argument between him and some of the Italian officers at the station, we assumed that he was trying to smooth things out both for the Army and Navy aviators who had a lot of trouble in making their mechanics understand them. This had caused some friction.

We found, however, that LaGuardia was all for the Army. His chief interest was in finishing the training of his pilots and meanwhile letting the Navy twiddle its thumbs. This was contradictory to the orders we had received in Rome and snarled things up for a while. Major LaGuardia was, of course, a big man in Italy, one of their own heroes in an American uniform. He had all kinds of medals pinned on him, and when he arrived at the camp the Italian colors were hoisted above the Stars and Stripes.

He was not the only wonderful scenery. The country around Gallarate was the most beautiful in the world. It was the lake district of Northern Italy and in flying we would pass over Lake Como and Lake Maggori and soar almost up to the Alps. It was something to remember all your life.

However, we were very glad to leave Malpensa early in July and expected to start off immediately for somewhere with our machines. Instead of this, we had to just sit and wait. It was enough to afflict even a Wag with melancholia. Enthusiasm oozed away. Lieutenant Callan had told me in Rome that the first eight pilots to complete the course at Malpensa were to take their planes to Rome and thence to Brindisi. From there they were to bomb the Austrian base of Cattaro which was directly across the Adriatic. The Italians had information that the Austrians intended to begin a naval and air offensive from Cattaro and the trick was to beat them to it. As soon as ten American pilots were ready at Malpenso I sent a telegram to Lieutenant Callan informing him of the fact and we went to Milan where we parked in comfortable quarters and waited and waited. No orders came. We went touring around to kill time, to Lake Como and so on, but got fed up with that. It was a poor imitation of getting on with the war. Lady Luck and I were not on speaking terms. I had to come down with the flu and was ma-

## PETULANT PILGRIMS TO ITALY

rooned in the Red Cross hospital in Milan. Then, of course, the orders came and 'Reg' Coombe had to go to Rome in my place to see Lieutenant Callan.

Meanwhile 'Hen' Landon flew south to Brindisi in a Caproni to deliver the machine to the Italian Navy at Gioja del Colle in the heel of Italy. Howard Maxwell started in another plane. He had an Italian officer who said he knew the country fluently and could easily find his way. He was to steer for the Mediterranean and then follow the coast to Rome which would seem to be a fairly easy place to hit. Not so! Nothing was heard from this outfit for two days. It caused worry. Then we learned by telephone that a strange Caproni had landed near one of the small lakes in the mountains, very close to the Austrian front. This we discovered to be Maxwell and his sagacious Italian chaperon. The latter, failing to find the Mediterranean, had sighted the lake and took it to be the vast body of salt water he was looking for. When he became aware of his slight error, it was too late. He had to land. If they had kept going fifteen minutes longer, the Austrian chasse planes would have probably shot them down.

Well, 'Reg' Coombe came back to Milan from Rome with the news that the bombing excursion to Cattaro was all off. We were to take our machines, just as fast as the Caproni factory turned them out, and fly them to Paris and then to the field of the Northern Bombing Group at St. Inglevert. Far be it from me to speak a captious or discourteous word, but there was too much '*Domani*' in the Italian promises which seemed as negligible as a snowball in hell.

The machines given us were a very inferior lot. We had been trained on the Capronis equipped with 600 h.p. Isotta-Fraschini motors which were first-class. When it came to delivering those we were to take to France, we drew Fiat motors which were a terrible failure and were responsible for the death of many fine men.

We were almost ready to start north, on the flight to France, when Harry Davison and several others turned up in Milan with Eddie McDonnell. They were to ride with us as second pilots and learn how to handle the skittish Caproni. This idea was excellent, but there was nothing but trouble with the supply of Capronis. Emerging from the hospital after two weeks of flu, I received a telegram saying that my brother had been very

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seriously wounded in France and urging me to make every effort to see him. The only way I could arrange any leave was fly one of the Capronis to France. So I arranged to take the next one available, although I was feeling far from rugged.

Leaving Milan on August 7th, I spent that night at Turin. Bad weather held me up two days but I finally managed to get away in company with two other planes. Mike Murray flew one, and Eddie McDonnell the other. Eddie had to turn back because one of his motors got afire. Mike Murray and I became separated over the Alps and I drifted quite far south. We were trying to make Lyons, but our charts were very narrow and it was hard to get your bearings when you went off the chart. We saw Mont Blanc below us and kept the course until we descended above the lower slopes. Then I hopelessly lost myself and ran out of gasoline. I was high up in the air at the time and could find no landing-place that looked like anything easier than sudden death. The ground was extremely rough where I bumped it. The Caproni tried to knock the top off a small mountain, turned a complete somersault, and flew into kindling wood. Just out of hospital though I was, my constitution was too tough to be dented. The second pilot was slightly injured. His name was Crumm. I left him in a hospital in a little town called Brioude. Abandoning the crumbs of the Caproni, I wended my way to Paris by train and obtained permission to go to Nantes and look for my wounded brother. I found him in a very bad way and it affected me deeply. He had been in France more than a year and this was our first meeting.

I spent a day and a half with him and then returned to Paris, expecting to go to St. Inglevert and get some real instruction. But they were short of planes and wanted more pilots to hustle to Italy to hustle back with more Capronis. So I went surging through to Rome. I went on to Milan and found the same old crowd still waiting and waiting for their Capronis. This was all the good it ever did them, for at last they went to Paris by rail. 'Hen' Landon and I pestered Coombe with letters. Had our orders gone through? If so, were they ditched somewhere? If not, why not? We had been there almost long enough to take our naturalization papers when we, too, were told to proceed to Paris, not, however, by the Caproni route.

It did knock the crust off our self-esteem when Captain Hanrahan informed us that he didn't even know we had been

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down in Italy. It made us feel that we had played a very important part in the plans of the Northern Bombing Group. Back we went to Milan. What we needed, for the sake of economy, was commuters' tickets. The next step in our education was a course in the Caproni factory and another in the Isotta-Fraschini works. It was the middle of October when we were rooted out of this and forwarded to St. Inglevert. There we were not astonished to learn that the famous Capronis had failed to perform. They had been condemned for night bombing until one of them could complete a satisfactory test in the daytime. This never happened.

It now filtered into our precocious intellects that the Northern Bombing Group was a splendidly big and promising undertaking which had been crippled largely by the failure to obtain good machines and enough of them. We waited — still waiting, please observe — at St. Inglevert until the Armistice which we earnestly celebrated in Calais. By way of passing the time, we rode at a Belgian cavalry school near our camp. Navy tars like us always did like to mount the quarterdeck of a horse. Most of the flying officers at St. Inglevert went home soon after peace came. The rest of us were held to fly the infernal Capronis to Issoudun, via Paris, where they were to be kissed good-bye. They were finally burned as junk.

It was in foggy, rainy December that Howard Maxwell and I started off in the farewell flight of two of these surviving Capronis. I had Harry Foster with me as second pilot. The fog was thick but we concluded to push on for Paris, on the theory that if we didn't get away from St. Inglevert we could never go home. Maxwell lost his way and smashed up at Abbéville. Harry Foster and I flew close to the ground until it rained so hard we had to land in the mud of a British field outside of Paris. We broke a propeller while taxiing to a hangar, for the mud was up to your knees. Our able mechanic, Meyers, put on a new propeller, after which we watched it rain in Paris for the next two weeks. Every morning we looked out of the window for the good old sun. He had quit business. On the day before Christmas we flew to Issoudun, which was the gloomiest place in the world, all cluttered up with hundreds of Army pilots looking for orders home.

We delivered our dear Caproni to the Army officials, received a receipt for the treasure, and hurried back to Paris for Christmas



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Eve. Hope brightened the holiday. We would go to St. Inglevert and there find our sailing orders and 'Hen' Landon would soon be weeping over the sign of the National Biscuit Company in a town called New York. And what did we get? The promise that if we were good boys we might take another Caproni to Issoudun! However, fortune rolled the dice with aces up. On New Year's Day, Henderson smashed the last Caproni when his landing gear broke as he was getting off. When he came down again, the noble machine rolled over on its nose and died the death amid lusty cheers from the bystanders.

This seemed to slay the hoodoo. Three days later, we bade St. Inglevert a fond farewell, homeward bound. It may be said, without hanging garlands on ourselves, that 'Hen' Landon's Caproni and mine were the only two that reached Issoudun alive, of the five that were to have been delivered from St. Inglevert.

Henry Landon is brief and repressed when he refers to his Italian summer. He did fly down to the heel of Italy in four hops, as has been mentioned, and it was reckoned an achievement. He seems to have fallen desperately in love with the Capronis, like the rest of them, but refrains from profanity, denunciation, or explosions in his gas tank, and merely observes, 'The less said about the performance the better but, between ourselves, even the Italians hated to fly them.'

He becomes more loquacious after leaving Italy and says:

I was mighty glad to get back to France and my friends, but my joy was short-lived. At about this time the Kaiser got wind of the fact that Bob Lovett had concentrated his Wags and they would soon make night hideous with '*Roll dem. Bones*,' so he chucked his job and the war. Then came the big exodus from St. Inglevert and I began to pack up only to find that I was elected to stay and help wash the dishes. When the gang pulled out, I was the only pilot left at the station. I was immediately promoted to be Executive Officer. When Headquarters called for the Ordnance Officer they put me on the wire. The next call might be for the Transportation Department and I was elected. Luckily the chief yeoman knew everything, so I asked him and





OVER THE ALPS WITH HARRY DAVISON



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saved myself many painful moments. Soon, however, Walker joined me with some additional pilots and things resumed a rosy complexion.

Sam and I reached Issoudun safely with our Capronis and wished them on the Army. Three others were smashed en route, and the sixth was dismantled with the aid of every axe in the station, and then burned. After that I burned the wind for home from which I had been absent seventeen months.<sup>1</sup>

Lieutenant McDonnell has offered us glimpses of Harry Davison successfully winging it over the Alps in a Caproni that kindly consented to fly that far. He was sent overseas in July, with Allan Ames and McDonnell as ship-mates, to join the Northern Bombing Group. Captain Hanrahan held him in Paris ten days for some officer work and then sent him to Milan. The tales of hard luck and disaster attending the Italian enterprise are apt to produce a curious illusion in the mind of one hearing about them for the first time. It seems as though that flight across the Alps to France must have been an air journey of days, so

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

Period 1 April to 19 May, 1918:

Ensign Landon is an excellent seaplane pilot, willing, eager and skillful. However, he has a tendency to take unnecessary chances in flying work. Experience will destroy this tendency. He is most interested in his aviation duties but at times is inclined to neglect details and not to be sufficiently painstaking and thorough. He is most active and eager and is a natural leader of men although his manner of giving commands frequently shows lack of experience in positions of authority. He has the makings of an efficient and excellent officer.

W. M. CORRY, *Lt., U.S.N.*

*Commanding Le Croisic.*

Period 15 June to 30 September, 1918:

This officer has been known to the writer for over a year and he has always shown himself to be excellent officer material. He is an excellent pilot of either seaplanes or Caproni machines and did very creditable work in making a 547-mile flight from Milan to the south of Italy. He had charge of a small detachment of officers in Italy flying with the Italian Naval Air Service and did very good work in handling his detachment. He is very willing and a hard worker and will undertake any duties assigned him without question. He handles men well and is very popular with both officers and men. A good officer and a gentleman.

JOHN LANSING COLLAN, *Lt. Cdr., U.S.N.R.F.*

*Commanding U.S.N. Air Station in Italy.*

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entangled was it with delays and difficulties. With a start of relieved surprise one finds that it was a matter of a few hours only if the machine hung together and the motors behaved. The sensations and the scenery have been already described. Harry Davison was not memorably impressed by either. It was merely one more flight.

In other words, when you did pull off the Caproni stunt it was soon over and there you were! Harry is as concise about it as an official communique: <sup>1</sup>

Lieutenant McCormick and I were together in one machine. We crossed the Alps successfully and reached Paris, but were forced down by bad weather at Abbéville, about 120 miles from St. Inglevert. There we were detained five days by motor trouble. Finally we arrived at St. Inglevert.

During the next fortnight at St. Inglevert, he was nominally on flying duty, but there were no machines fit to fly. All hands were laboring with the Capronis, overhauling, repairing, repainting, replacing parts, trying to get them ready for the night bombing program. Three or four of them were placed in commission, but not amid any

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

LIEUTENANT (J.G.) HARRY P. DAVISON, JR.

August 24 to September 30, 1918:

An excellent pilot and officer. Has made 4 raids with 214 Squadron R.A.F., as gunlayer. Two trips being made on the night of Sept. 28-29 during push in his part of lines. He is keen and intelligent and very capable. Recommended for promotion when due.

ROBERT A. LOVETT  
*Lieutenant U.S.N.R.F.*

May 2 to June 28, 1918

Lieutenant Davison is an excellent pilot and can be depended upon to carry out orders and instructions in any hazardous expedition.

N. E. IRWIN, *Captain*

April 1 to April 30, 1918:

This officer has been employed on duty as a Naval Aviator primarily in connection with flying. He is a very good aviator but slightly lacking in initiative and aggressiveness for executive duties. It is recommended that he be advanced to rank of Lieutenant (j.g.).

P. N. L. BELLINGER  
*Lieut. Comdr. U.S.N.*

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loud cheers. The lack of enthusiasm was notable. With never a regret, Lieutenant Harry Davison was separated from the Capronis. He did not have to be dragged away. He departed at a gallop. Squadron 214, Royal Air Service was using the same field. It pleased Harry hugely when he was assigned to this outfit as a gun-layer in a Handley-Page with Lieutenant Nichols as pilot. This was something like! The war had begun to take on symptoms of interest. He is willing to explain in some detail what this segment of life was like:

When the weather was clear and it looked at all possible for flying, we would tune up the machines and prepare for a raid in the evening. Most of our mornings were spent in studying maps of Belgium very carefully. Every man had to memorize about sixteen of the most important enemy aerodromes in Flanders, where every hangar and building was placed. We had to learn all the main roads, canals, and railroads leading to these aerodromes or to the various cities all over the country. In addition to this, we had to bone up on the Hun lighting or signal system throughout Belgium which consisted of various flashes shown on different marks on the landscape. It was like a system of light-houses. Without having been on Belgian soil, a pilot was supposed to know it as well as he did New York.

When the weather was clear we had supper about 5.30, after which the C.O., Major Brackley, assembled the raiding party in the mapping office. There the final instructions were handed out, objectives explained, and so on. The machine in which I went carried fifteen 112-pound bombs, four 25-pound bombs, and a couple of phosphorus bombs. After the talk in the mapping office, if the weather was still O.K. we went to the aerodrome and started the motors. The commanding officer gave the signal and the first machine taxied to the starting place. Then it opened up and got away, showing navigation lights. The other machines followed about five minutes apart, circling about the field to make sure the motors were all right and then making for the objectives.

Never in my life have I seen anything quite so beautiful as some of those night raids. Of course the first raid I went on was tremendously interesting to me, coming back over Holland and



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following the coast line. On another night we had to climb through a heavy bank of clouds. Above that the full moon was shining. What I remember most clearly is the gorgeous moon shining on that sea of clouds. It was too wonderful for words. I came out of my dreams when the sky suddenly lit up over Ostend with a million archie shells and flaming onions.

And there was the Bruges barrage. I can never forget that. Three miles square and 10,000 feet up, it was one appalling blaze of bursting archie, onions, pom-poms, parachute flares, searchlights, hostile aircraft. Awe-inspiring? Easily that. It seemed a miracle that any planes could pass through it at all, but when you rode with a British pilot you realized that he was good for anything. All hell couldn't stop him. It was wonderful to see him work his way through a batch of searchlights. He would keep the nose of his machine headed almost straight until he came to a beam. Then he would slowly lift a wing over and sort of weave his way through. And most of the time he was not spotted at all.

All of which makes it sound like the most fascinating kind of a joy ride. However, there was a great deal more to it than harmless moonshine as other participants have taken pains to point out. Late in October Harry Davison was returned to his American squadron at St. Inglevert. On November 9th he was sent to England for further training in night bombing work in the British school at Stonehenge. He proceeded no farther than London, however, when the Armistice suddenly finished his part in the war. He was lucky enough to contrive a speedy exodus for home, sailing on November 16th. A few weeks later, he was informed that he need no longer insert the letters (j.g.) in his designation of rank. He was promoted to be Lieutenant Henry P. Davison, Jr.

We left Kenneth Smith somewhere beyond the Alps. His flight to France has been referred to by Eddie McDonnell. It was rather tame after being adrift in the Bay of Biscay and mussing up German submarines with bombs. However, he goes so far as to say:

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It was interesting, for neither McDonnell nor myself had had any experience in a machine like a Caproni. I had never been up in a land machine and knew nothing about cross country flying. And it was unpleasant to see so many machines crashing and burning up while we were waiting at Turin. Perfect weather conditions favored us when we did get away and the passage over the Alps was a grand spectacle. At St. Inglevert I was attached to Squadron 214, R.A.S., with Harry Davison and others, and enjoyed several night raids over the lines. On November 2nd I was ordered to the United States as an instructor, and was able to beat the Armistice to it by one day, for I sailed from Brest in the *Great Northern* on November 10th.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department.

### LIEUTENANT KENNETH R. SMITH

Period 12 August to 25 August, 1920:

Excellent officer and flyer. This officer is recommended for further training provided reserve officers on inactive status are again called for active training.

A. H. DOUGLAS, Lt. Cdr., U.S.N.

*Naval Air Station*

*Rockaway Beach*

Period 15 September to 30 September, 1918:

This officer is a very capable pilot and has had varied experiences in sea patrol work. He is especially valuable as a flight commander on active service.

ROBERT H. LOVETT, Lt., U.S.N.R.F.

*Commanding U.S.N.A.S. #1*

Period 11 June to 4 September, 1918:

An excellent seaplane pilot. Has distinguished himself on several occasions. Awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French Government for bombing an enemy submarine on April 23rd, 1918, while attached to the U.S. Naval Air Station at Île Tudy.

S. S. CRAVEN, Capt., U.S.N.

*Chief of Operating Section, Naval Aviation Forces, Foreign Service*

Period 26 February to 10 June, 1918:

This officer has shown marked professional ability and is in my opinion an exceptionally capable officer. As Chief Pilot of this station he has kept machines, hangars and crews in a high state of efficiency. He is a good flier, a good organizer, and takes great interest in his work.

C. E. SUGDEN, 2nd Lt. of Engrs., U.S.N.C.G.

*Commanding U.S.N.A.S. Île Tudy, France*

## CHAPTER XLII

### HOPPING OVER THE ALPS

WITH a sigh of relief, we have all the pilgrims to Italy safely off our hands excepting Coombe and Bartow Read. One feels reluctant to leave them until they have been safely accounted for, undamaged and right-side up. The entire Italian chapter is like one of those movie 'serials' in which the hero continually ducks disaster and toys with sudden death. You simply have to know what happens to him next. This one might have been labeled, 'And the Caproni Still Pursued Him.' Reginald Coombe was meanwhile making a collection of troubles of his own. He became entangled with the expedition which was expected to make Austrians hard to find at the Cattaro base, but which proved to be a dud. Colonel Gray, of the Royal Air Force, came down to take a hand in trying to expedite the delivery of Capronis to the Northern Bombing Group. He brought with him a group of Handley-Page pilots who were to serve as second pilots with the American officers detailed to ferry nine Capronis to France. These were ready to be taken over from the factory.

On August 27th, five of these started from Taleido, with Colonel Gray in the lead. The other first pilots were Otis, McCormick, Henderson, and Palmer. As they were about to leave, an Italian *motorsiti* crawled through the after propeller of Henderson's machine and was instantly killed. This was not an auspicious omen. On the following day, two more Capronis left, for the south of Italy, for service against the Austrians. One of them crashed at Pisa that same day.

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Coombe was trying to keep things from stalling in the factory and to overcome that unfortunate Italian habit of '*Domani*.' While waiting around, Landon flew one of these planes south to Gioja del Colle. According to Coombe, this was the only one of a flock of them which reached the destination without crashing. Reginald had expected to make this flight, but was prevented by temporary disability which he explains as follows:

I was up with an Italian pilot in one of the new machines of the lot that was to be sent to the Northern Bombing Group. The pilot lost his head and tried to land across the field with tail to the wind. Of course he would have overshot, and, seeing this, he put the machine on the ground at flying speed. The result was that the landing-gear was swept off and the plane thrown upon her nose. It happened so quickly that the first thing I knew I was pinned with my face to the ground and the Italian pilot jammed against me, howling and shrieking with blood pouring from his mouth. It was very unpleasant because there was no telling whether the machine was going to catch fire or not. Gasoline trickled down the tanks which were resting upon our prostrate forms and if they had blazed up we would have been fried to a turn. However, they pulled us out and our hurts were not serious. The Italian's collar-bone was broken, and my ankle cut. It put me in bed for two weeks.

About this time, Eddie McDonnell came down with Harry Davison and Percy Morgan and Ken Smith to take planes up north. Sam Walker was selected as one of the first pilots, but he was really too soon out of the hospital to undertake the trip. It accounted, I think, for his crashing in the Alps. Anxiety to get to his wounded brother Joe was what persuaded him to try it.

Two more machines left on August 10th. This took all the spare pilots but Kilmer, Maxwell, and myself. I planned to take Kilmer as my second pilot and to make a start as soon as I could get out of bed. We were all set on the 14th and pulled out for Milan with a favoring wind, in Caproni B-16. The weather was fine. We flew at 2500 metres and made a record as far as Turin — an hour and five minutes. Here the complications began to ensue, as it were. We found Harry Davison, Ken Smith, McDonnell, and McCormick all laid up with motor troubles. This

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was as far as they had flown on the road to France. What now dawned on them and us and everybody else concerned was that the Fiat motors were all to the bad.

Two machines resumed the trip on the 15th, but one caught fire and had to turn back. McDonnell and I made an attempt to leave next day, but my oil system clogged and the pump had to be dismounted. We tried it again the day after that and both of us had to turn back because of motor troubles. It dawned on us again that the Fiat engine was liable to make a fellow feel a bit uncomfortable and all that sort of thing.

On the 17th, all the planes excepting mine appeared to be ready to try it across the mountains. Nichols and Terres, both ensigns, were in No. 1 machine, with an enlisted mechanic. They opened up the motors and took off the length of the field in the wind. Everything seemed all right until the Caproni reached a height of 150 feet, when the left motor suddenly stopped. They tried a wide turn to the right to get back to the field when the right motor also stopped, throwing the machine into a very quick turn. Almost simultaneously the rear motor died. The plane slipped off on the wing and was instantly in a dive, just beginning to spin when it hit the aerodrome on the nose.

We ran over to the wreck, but both Nichols and Terres had been killed. The mechanic died on the way to the hospital. It was a dreadful sight. Their bodies had been smashed. The machine was broken into little pieces, utterly demolished.

A Board of Inquiry was appointed, but the condition of the wreck made it impossible to discover just what had happened, but it was probably due to an air-lock in the gasoline system, stopping the flow. The three men were buried in a cemetery near the city. The funeral was impressive, with officers and officials in attendance. This accident made us feel even more uncomfortable about flying the Capronis.

On August 19th, I got off first, followed by McDonnell and Palmer. The day was cloudy and we were unable to see the mountains until we were right on them. Then the clouds completely blanketed us. It was impossible to go ahead, so McDonnell turned back to the field and I followed him. Then for several days we had to wait for clear weather. Four machines of us made another start on the 23d, piloted by McDonnell, Palmer, Hudson, and myself. I led off and had a nasty experience while



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doing so. I opened up the two side motors, then pulled back the middle throttle, and something stuck. The motors opened up for no more than 800 revolutions. The machine barely lifted from the ground and I just cleared the factory roofs. It was cheery to see the ambulance ready on the aerodrome. They expected some of us to repeat poor Nichols's disaster.

Because of this slow get-away I was behind the others in gaining my altitude and was only about 1000 metres when we reached the first valley. Hudson had to quit because of engine trouble. McDonnell was leading. The route lay through a pass running due northwest. This pass forked at Susa, which we reached in forty-five minutes. Here two routes were possible; one to the right up over Lake Cenis, and the other to the left over a little place called Oulx. Both valleys met again at Modane. At Susa we split and I lost sight of the other machine until I reached the aerodrome at Lyons. Just west of Susa is a long high ridge running about northeast-southwest, its height averaging about 3000 metres. At this point the higher peaks had been reached. To the right of Susa was the Roche-Melon 3537 metres, and to the left the Chaberton, 3138 metres. I had not quite enough altitude to cross over the ridge, so followed the valley around to the right in a northwesterly direction over Lake Cenis, passing over a little village of Lanslebourg nestling in the valley at the junction of the Ark and Isire Rivers.

Up to this point my altitude had ranged between 1000 and 2000 metres, and at that low altitude the air in the valleys was frightfully rough. A tremendous bump would come on one wing and turn the machine towards the mountain, first on one side, followed by an equally hard bump on the other, which turned us in the opposite direction. I never had to work so hard in my life to keep the machine steady. However, by the time we reached Lanslebourg and we had gained about 3000 metres, the air was smoother. From Lanslebourg we took a course a point or so south of west and passed directly over the ridge known as the Dent Parrachee, altitude of 3512 metres. Cutting over the southern extremity of the ridge, we passed just to the right of the town of Modane, where we could see the railroad run into the Mont Cenis Tunnel. This particular group of peaks is known as the Massif de la Vanoise. Modane lies in a valley which curves around in a northwesterly direction through St. Michael, St. Avre, Aignevelle, up to Chambéry. Instead of following this

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

valley around, I steered directly over the peaks and ridges headed straight for Chambéry. My altitude was sufficient to permit a good view of the valleys for some distance and I kept my bearings by means of the different peaks and glaciers, which were all clearly marked on the maps.

Leaving Modane, I kept on a northwesterly course, keeping Aigneselles D'Arves, 3514 metres, on my left straight on over the Grupe de Rousses, a long straight ridge of mountains running southwest-northeast. Past this ridge was another parallel to it, the Chaîne de Belle Donne, the last high ridge to be crossed. Before us lay the Isire River with the Grenoble to the south, and Chambéry almost straight ahead. The country gradually flattened out into a wide plain. I passed almost directly over Chambéry keeping the Lac Bourget (Aix-les-Bains) to the right. The rest of the trip was easy going, for stretching miles and miles ahead over the plain was a long straight white highway into Lyons. Following this road we found the aerodrome at Bron, three or four miles east of Lyons.

We had left Turin at 10.45 and landed at Bron at 1.55, three hours and ten minutes for the entire trip. This was a little longer than it should have been under ordinary conditions, but we had to buck a strong head wind almost the entire way. My altitude had been something over 4000 metres during the larger part of the trip. Save for a few clouds in the valleys, the air was clear as crystal. As far as one could see all around were snow capped peaks, glaciers, and little green winding valleys; while on the right Mont Blanc stood out towering above the other peaks with its 4804 metres. It was a very peculiar sensation to pass over a ridge, look down a few hundred feet to see nothing but desolate ice and snow, and then a minute later to have a green valley many thousands of feet underneath. It was a marvelous trip, and one that had been made, I suppose, by no more than six or seven machines.

I found that McDonnell had beaten me to Lyons by a few minutes, while some ten minutes after I landed, the third machine came in. At eleven o'clock the next morning, McDonnell's machine got away for Dijon. I followed, but had to return on account of backfire in the carburetor. I was unable to get away until the afternoon and made Dijon at five o'clock after an hour and a half trip through very pretty country along the Saone River.

## HOPPING OVER THE ALPS

The next day was spent in getting our machines into some sort of shape, as both McDonnell and I had experienced some trouble with the motors. The next afternoon, the 30th, we were both ready. I got my three motors running and waited a while for McDonnell to get his started. He seemed unable to start his center motor so I left alone. Shortly after leaving Dijon, we ran into heavy low clouds which bothered us for the balance of the trip. This was the most difficult lap of the whole journey as far as finding one's way was concerned. Crossing the Alps we had been able to follow peaks and valleys, but this country was all pretty flat and with not one river to guide us. Also it was the longest leg of the journey.

Forty-five minutes after leaving Dijon, we were lost, apparently not having allowed enough for the heavy cross-wind. We were unable to find ourselves on the narrow roller map which we were using, so I brought out a larger map which I had with me. By means of this we were able to locate ourselves. It was a pretty nasty, uninteresting trip.

We did not hit Orly until just at dark, a good three hours after leaving Dijon. We left the machine in the hands of the Army authorities at Orly, and drove the five or six miles into Paris.

We reported next morning to Captain Hanrahan at headquarters and found 'Ken' MacLeish and George Moseley there. The larger part of the Northern Bombing organization was already near Calais. Captain Hanrahan gave us orders to proceed to St. Inglevert and to deliver the planes to Bob Lovett in command there. Three days of rain kept us in Paris, not very much against our will. On the 2d, we got away from Orly, eleven o'clock in the morning. I shall never forget the beautiful sight of the city of Paris underneath us. There was not a cloud in the sky; everything stood out sharply and distinctly. We got across the southwest corner of the city passing to the left of the Eiffel Tower, headed up north for Beauvais toward Calais.

An hour after leaving the city, we ran into a heavy rainstorm which we weathered for a few minutes. It got so bad, however, that I decided to land at an aerodrome which we happened to pass. This was at Formeris, on the field of a Voisin night-bombing squadron. The personnel of this station had left, taking with them forty planes that very morning. Owing to the recent Allied offensive and the advance of the lines, this outfit had had to

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

move up nearer the front. We laid up here for a couple of hours, getting away again when things looked a bit clearer in the afternoon. Only a few minutes after leaving, we ran into rain again and very heavy winds as we reached the coast. The route lay to the west of Amiens over Étaples to Boulogne, and thence to St. Inglevert, which lay on the Calais-Boulogne road about five miles from Calais. I never had to land in such rough air as we struck going down at St. Inglevert. We got into a small slip a few feet from the ground, which I was able to get out of by using one side motor. A very high wind was blowing and we were considerably fortunate in having landed without smashing.

Bob Lovett was in charge of the outfit here, which consisted of 200 or 300 men and about fifteen officers. The aerodrome was used by 214 Squadron R.A.F., one of the original R.N.A.S. Handley-Page outfits in command of Major Brackley. Those officers who had already made the trip up from Italy were stationed here, going over the lines with the British in the after-seat of the Handleys to get experience and knowledge of the country.

It was just about my turn to get into the 214 Squadron when orders came for me to go with Eddie McDonnell and a Caproni to our repair base at Eastleigh, England. I tried to get out of this duty, but could not do so. The idea was to have this Caproni taken down and rebuilt, and it was to be my job to test the rebuilt machine out, not a very agreeable one. It had been found impossible to use these pieces of junk over the lines. One machine had made an attempt in a raid over Ostend, but motor trouble had developed and the machine had come to grief on the beach off Dunkirk. By this time everybody was leery of the machines.

While at St. Inglevert one very unfortunate accident occurred. Palmer's machine, which I had left at Lyons, came in one afternoon, landed across the aerodrome, turned about to taxi into the hangars and was running along at about twelve to fifteen miles an hour on the ground when suddenly the wheels stuck in a soft spot. The pilots opened the two side motors a little to shake her free, but the wheels still held, the tail came up and the plane dropped slowly on to her nose. The fuselage had broken off just forward of the pilots' seat and the dashboard pinned the pilots in so that they were unable to move. Both propellers, hitting the ground, broke off and the motor started racing. The mechanic seated in the rear machine gun cage was thrown clear and made an attempt to cut the motors, but succeeded in stop-





ENTRANCE TO THE OFFICERS' QUARTERS, ST. INGLEVERT



OFFICERS' QUARTERS, ST. INGLEVERT





## HOPPING OVER THE ALPS

ping only one. In a few seconds the whole machine was a mass of flames. It was impossible to get anywhere near the two men, Frothingham and Palmer, and fire extinguishers were of no use whatever. It was an awful sight to be there and see these two men burn up, but there was absolutely nothing that could be done. Frothingham had a little black dog called 'Caproni,' which he had picked up in Italy, very much like a Pomeranian. The pup was in poor Palmer's flying-suit at this time, but was able to extricate itself and jump free.

Lieutenant Reginald Coombe forgets to include mention in his story of a letter he received from Captain David Hanrahan with reference to the tragic death of these two American pilots. It read as follows:

NORTHERN BOMBING GROUP H.Q.  
2 October, 1918

SUBJECT: Commendatory action in the face of danger.

I have been informed of the part you took in attempting to save the lives of the two pilots, Ensigns Frothingham and Palmer, when Caproni plane B-11 was wrecked and burned on the field at Squadron #1 on the afternoon of September 15, 1918.

Such cool and courageous action as you displayed in attempting to extricate the two unconscious pilots from their pinned-in position in the plane, while it was a mass of flames, and in attempting to extinguish the fire, speak well for your own devotion to duty and are in keeping with the highest aims of our service. It gives me a great measure of satisfaction to commend you for it.

A copy of this letter has been sent to the Department with the request that it be appended to your record.

Resuming Coombe's narrative and carrying it to a conclusion, he goes on to say:

I left with Eddie McDonnell on the 27th of September for Eastleigh. We crossed over the Channel to Folkestone, then followed the coast south passing over Hastings and Brighton. At Shoreham we hit some bad weather about lunch time so decided to come down and have a bite to eat while it passed over. This was a school of the Gosport type for instructors, and the flying here was the most finished I had ever seen. It was a beauti-

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

ful thing to watch. Avros and Camels were the only machines used. After lunching at the British mess we pushed on and reached Eastleigh about five in the afternoon, an hour away, the whole trip having taken us about three hours. Eastleigh was an enormous place, looking like a great factory; all the hangars being of concrete. Commander Bulmer was in command. This was the termination of my trip, Milan, Italy, to Eastleigh, England, which had taken some fifteen hours of flying time. I think that Eddie McDonnell and myself were the only two in the Unit to make the trip up from Italy as first pilots.

Eastleigh was situated about four miles from Southampton, and it was proposed to do all the repair work for the Northern Bombing Group at this point. Disabled machines, motors to be overhauled, and any other general repair work was to be sent from the field to Eastleigh where the work would be done, the machines re-equipped and flown out to the front again. Also new material, planes and motors, were to go directly to Eastleigh from the factories, to be assembled there, tested and fully equipped and flown out to the lines. There were about 1500 men quartered at the station and 60 officers. Most of the officers being engineers or motor experts. Ken MacLeish was in charge of the flying, and he was the only officer whom I knew on the station. There was practically no work of any kind for me to do as the machine was immediately stripped down and disassembled as soon as I delivered it. I flew around a bit with Ken in some of the DH's, of which there were three types on the station. We had the Liberty DH-4, from the United States which was beginning to come in ever-increasing numbers; and the British DH-9a, an improvement on the 4, powered with Liberty motors; and an instruction machine, the old DH-6.

On the 30th of September a telegram came for me from Captain Hanrahan to report to headquarters, London, for orders to proceed to Milan for further ferrying of Caproni's. This took the wind out of my sails for I had little desire to bring another one of those aerial caskets up from Italy. However, there was nothing to do but to go to London, which I did the next day. At headquarters I met Charlie Fuller and Alphy Ames who were stationed there, and also Fearing who had been with us in the fall of 1917 at Hourtin. Much to my relief I found that it had been decided in view of all the accidents that had occurred to discontinue the ferrying of these machines this very morning.

## HOPPING OVER THE ALPS

Apparently, of the twenty brand-new machines to leave Italy, only eight had gotten up to Calais, the other twelve having crashed. Five people had been killed and several others injured.

I had an opportunity of going out on to one of our battleships, the *Wyoming*, and saw the Grand Fleet at close quarters. A wonderful sight it was to see the Firth of Forth one mass of gray battleships. The balance of my leave I spent in London, except for a run out to Sandwich and return to Eastleigh with Frank Lynch, who had just been detailed to duty there on the 25th of October. I had practically nothing to do from that time on until the Armistice. It was slow work getting the Caproni into shape and it was not until the 10th of November that the three motors were on the test stand. I was not sorry that the Armistice came the next day, for two of the three motors immediately caught fire as soon as started.

We all saw that there was going to be nothing else to do in our line so Frank Lynch, who was at Headquarters in London, got orders for Harry Davison, Bill Blair, himself and me to take the first boat out of Liverpool sailing November 16th.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

Period from 13 June to 21 September, 1918:

This officer (Lieutenant (j.g.) Reginald G. Coombe) has been known to the writer for over a year and he has always proven himself excellent officer material. He flies either seaplanes or Caproni machines in an excellent manner and applies himself to his work at all times. Is very willing, thorough, and a hard worker and will undertake any duties assigned him without question. Knows how to handle men and is very popular with both officers and men. An excellent officer and a gentleman.

J. L. CALLAN, *Lieut. Comdr., U.S.N.R.F.*  
*C.O., U.S.N. Air Stations in Italy*

Period from 1 April to 11 June, 1918:

This officer has served at LeCroisic Air Station since Nov. 1, 1917. He has efficiently performed all duties assigned him which included the following details:

|                              |           |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| Seaplane pilot.....          | 7½ months |
| Chief pilot.....             | 1 month   |
| Executive officer.....       | 1 month   |
| Ordnance and instrument..... | 1 month   |
| Repair officer.....          | 1 month   |

He has displayed an ever ready, eager, active interest in his duties and will give satisfaction in any work assigned him.

W. M. CORRY, *Lieutenant, U.S.N.*  
*Commanding, U.S.N.A.S. Le Croisic, France*

## CHAPTER XLIII

### BARTOW READ AT PORTO CORSINI

BARTOW READ was the only member of the Unit who served with the American naval aviation force which took over and operated the Italian bases at Pescara and Porto Corsini on the Adriatic. Lieutenant Commander W. Atlee Edwards supplies the following interesting information concerning these activities:

‘With reference to our work in the Adriatic, the following dispatch from the chief of staff of the Italian Navy to the Italian naval attaché in London, dated August 25, 1918, is of interest’:

American aviation recently began its support for our operations in the Adriatic. An American squadron energetically attacked and forced to return to Pola Austrian aeroplanes met near the Istrian coast. During the pursuit one American machine was obliged to land, but a very intrepid aviator took the pilot on board and destroyed the machine. Military works at Pola and especially aviation installations and submersible bases were bombarded by day on the twenty-first, during the night of the twenty-second, and at dawn on the twenty-third, by several Italian machines and some Americans. Four tons of explosives were dropped and numerous explosions and fires were seen. One of our hydroplanes is missing. Large Italian squadrons twice bombarded Durazzo on the same day and dropped 1500 kilogrammes of explosives on military works starting large fires. Also bombarded military works at Curzola. British aviation units continued to attack Cattaro, damaging bridges, hangars, submersible stations and railway station at Zelenika. Enemy chaser machines undertook some futile counter-operations. We made vigorous counter-attacks, one enemy machine fell in flames and another was obliged to descend. One British machine missing. Enemy aviators attempted to rally. A few Austrian planes on the night of the twenty-first, dropped thirty





MACCHI 5 TAKING OFF AT PORT CORSINI



## BARTOW READ AT PORTO CORSINI

bombs on Venice, one killed and three wounded, no damage to military works. One dead and four wounded at Cortellazzo attacked the same night. Five enemy machines again attacked Venice on the night of the twenty-third. Dropped a few bombs, no damage done, one civilian slightly wounded. During the night of the twenty-second, there was raid on Porto Corsini. Some damage to military establishments, six civilians wounded. Other attacks on Fiume, no damage. Our efficient anti-aircraft fire compelled the enemy machines to fly very high making their bomb dropping ineffective. One enemy seaplane was forced to come down near Lido. The crew of three was captured.

Bartow Read's connection with the enterprise began when he was ordered from Le Croisic to Pauillac to help assemble the equipment for the stations in Italy. It gratified him to receive the following letter as a farewell from his C.O., Lieutenant Corry:

*June 9, 1918*

MY DEAR READ:

I am very sorry, both for official and personal reasons, to have lost your services at this station on account of your detachment. However, this detachment was a matter of selection for more important duty, a duty that requires more skill in flight and more danger in action than experienced by an aviator at Le Croisic and, therefore, I congratulate you upon having been selected for the detail in Italy. I am confident that you will deliver the goods at your new station in the same efficient and cheerful manner that you have at all times displayed while under my command. Although one of the youngest officers in the service, you have made good in every respect, and I am sure that no matter what assignment may be given you, you will 'bring home the bacon.'

I have forwarded your efficiency report for the last quarter up to the date of your detachment and on this report I have recommended you for promotion to Lieutenant (j.g.). I would advise you to consult with your new commanding officer and get him also to forward an official recommendation to this effect, provided he sees his way clear to do so.

Bartow's reception at Pauillac led him to infer that he had got off on the wrong foot. He appeared to be entirely

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overlooked. No duty was assigned nor any quarters provided. He was justified in thinking it a very odd sort of war. He rustled a place to live and did stray jobs for a month with the idea of earning his keep, fighting forest fires, drilling bluejackets, and helping to set up the new H.S.-1s and Liberty motors.

At length some one in authority recalled what he was there for and he was told to go to Balsena, Italy, where they were training the American pilots who were to fly the bombing machines at the Adriatic stations. Thence he took his departure, in the seagoing phrase, for Porto Corsini and arrived there simultaneously with a train of fifty cars from Pauillac containing two hundred men and supplies for six months, not to mention the C.O. and his staff. Bartow could no longer complain that there was nothing to do. On that same night the Austrian airmen bombed the new station by way of a cordial welcome.

The Italian army squadron which had been occupying the station was not at all reluctant to hand it over to the Americans, who at once sent out their patrols which swept the coast from the mouth of the Po to Rimini. This sector was later extended south as far as Ancona. Two patrols were sent out daily. They were under the general direction of the Italian Director of Naval Aviation whose orders were that they were not to go messing about the enemy's coast without special instructions.

This made it a pretty stupid and tiresome routine and, after considerable urging the United States squadrons were permitted to do some day and night bombing against the Austrian naval base at Pola where the fleet was anchored. This work was increased to include daily reconnaissance of the harbor and near-by waters in order to report movements of all Austrian naval and merchant ships. To this was added, after a while, photographic surveys of the harbor.

## BARTOW READ AT PORTO CORSINI

The Austrians were not particularly active in trying to discourage these visits. They casually banged away with anti-aircraft batteries and used searchlights, but did little damage to the bombing and scouting planes. On one occasion, however, they seemed greatly annoyed and put up a most spiteful barrage. This was when bales of printed propaganda were dropped on them instead of bombs. They could stand just about so much.

Moonlight was required for the night bombing. This was because the only lights for getting off with were the blinkers on the planes, and also because at low tide the seaplanes fitted so snugly in the canal that there was only ten feet of space to spare. This handicap made it impossible to use the H.S.-1s, as had been suggested by the Force Commander's office in Paris, because their wing spread was wider than the canal. The machines employed were Macchi-8 bombers with 150 h.p. Issota-Fraschini motors, and Macchi-5 single-seaters with the same motor. Both types were very fast, the bombers doing 100 miles per hour and the scouts 115. The only serious fault Bartow Read found was that the bombers could carry only 100 kilos of bombs. He adds:

The regular patrols were not very exciting and the flights to Pola sound more thrilling than they really were. It always took a lot of persuasion before the Italian authorities would let us hop over and drop some bombs. They had an exaggerated idea of the danger of playing around over Pola. During a whole month before the Armistice we had all our single-seaters equipped with bombs but were not allowed to carry out our pet scheme of peppering the vessels of the Austrian fleet in daylight.

The surrender of Pola and the neighboring territory took place before the Austro-Italian armistice. The leading citizens sent a radio message to President Wilson asking that an American force occupy the city as they had severed their connection with Austria and were ready to turn over the Austrian fleet as an evidence of good faith.

During the last week of the war I was detailed to command a



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group of American pilots who were attached to the Italian Naval Squadron No. 241, flying single-seater land machines over the Piave front from Venice. It was machine-gun work entirely, attacking the Austrian troops who were then in retreat. This made a lively finish. It would have been more so if we could have made use of our complete new equipment of machine-guns which were ready for service when the news of peace came.

Bartow's letters to his mother add a good many details to the foregoing account and serve to round out the picture of this contact with the enemy on the Austrian front, by sea and land.

*August 7, 1918*

Since I last wrote, which was some time ago, I have been transferred again and am now at a station on the Adriatic. I have been up to my ears in work of the worst kind, that of starting a new station. I am chief pilot and in charge of all flying, pilots, machines, hangars, mechanics, also a few other little odds and ends such as ordnance, guns, cameras, supplying gas and oil, spare parts, etc., etc. So you see writing was out of the question. Since I have been here I have worn out two pairs of shoes, organized the two hundred men who are my own particular gang, tested ten machines and flown twenty-five hours in my own bus. I have been here eight days. In addition to my regular work I have taken the C.O. to Venice in my machine to report to the Italian Aviation Commander; taken the executive officer to a small town up the coast a ways where we stunted around to amuse the populace who were celebrating their own particular saint's day. Besides the above, I have been to Rimini by air, also have flown most of the regular patrols. Outside of flying, the only place I have been is from my room to the hangars. Tomorrow I am going to Ravenna to get a little rest.

*September 16*

I am still at Port Corsini on the same job as when I last wrote, doing about the same thing as we did in France with a few exceptions. We fly about the same kind of patrols here, but we have very little convoy work, and as no excitement ever shows up on these jobs, I have changed over from a bombing machine to a chasse. The only difference is that I fly alone and don't



BART READ'S SQUADRON IN ITALY



BART, PILOTS, AND ITALIAN PLANE



## BARTOW READ AT PORTO CORSINI

carry bombs. Instead we carry two machine guns, set in the bow and shooting straight ahead. This bus is intended for combat work. I have already been here a month and a half and have never seen an enemy plane of any kind. Still some fine day I hope at least to catch a glimpse of one in the distance. It would be much nicer when one comes home to the States to be able to say you had seen the enemy in some form or other.

October 15

I have, after promising one letter a day, done worse than one a week. This is because we suddenly became very busy over here and flew both night and day for some time. It was not that the activity was very remarkable, but practically all the machines had to have new motors at the same time, so those of us who were still on the job had to put in extra work. You see, each of us has his own buggy and flies that exclusively. Now mine is on the sick list and the others are doing most of the work. As you may have noticed in the papers, American aviators in Italy sometimes break into print. Occasionally they even bomb Pola on the Austrian coast. But if you notice carefully no one ever 'fails to return.' Well, that is quite correct, we do bomb the place and there is nothing to prevent our doing it every day except orders to the contrary. The Austrians don't seem to be able to put up any argument about it. I have never mentioned this before because it was not mentioned in the American papers until recently. As it is, I can now tell you that bombing Pola is a perfect cinch.

### *(Extract from Official Report)*

In retaliation, under orders from Commander Valli, two M-8s, piloted by Ensign R. B. Read and G. W. Knowles left station at 3.45 A.M. and bombed Pola at 5 A.M. Ensign Read's machine dropped one bomb on a group of searchlights and three on the arsenal. Although picked up by nine lights and held for eight or ten minutes, the barrage fire was very inaccurate and feeble. Knowles' machine dropped four bombs in close proximity to the land aeroplanes. This flight was interesting by reason of its being the first night flight attempted from this station, and the results obtained were excellent. Pola was located without trouble and likewise Porto Corsini on the return.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

*November 7*

I am now attached to a group of Henriots at Venice. There are six American pilots here and we are, so to speak, farmed out to an Italian squadron. The C.O., mechanics, etc., are all Italians. The machines are land scouts. We arrived just too late, however, as Austria signed the Armistice the day I arrived. After that we were going to Trieste, but the Austrians over there burned the hangars and broke up the ground so that has been called off. Now unless Germany signs the Armistice, too, we will move up through Austria to the new front that will be established between Austria and Germany. At least, that is my own opinion. Now we just fly for amusement and live in a hotel commandeered by the Italian Government. It is on the water front, three bridges down from the Piazza San Marco. Venice is lighted up for the first time in three years. It certainly is beautiful, but the lights take away much of the excitement we used to have when walking down to a restaurant in the evenings. You can always tell now whether you are stepping into a canal or a sidewalk.

*VENICE, November 11*

I am now attached to the only land chasse squadron in the Italian Navy. Unfortunately, though, we were supposed to come here for a drive and then hostilities up and quit on us. So my land chasse experience is only practice and a few hops to captured Austrian aerodromes for souvenirs. We sent some of our squadron over to Trieste to see if the field was good enough to use as a permanent base, but they found it all full of trenches and the hangars destroyed, so we must stay here until things are repaired over there. Of course if tonight's rumor is true, that the Germans have also surrendered, we will probably not go to Trieste at all. The people who flew over there brought back some amusing reports. The funniest one is that every Austrian aviator sold his machine to some civilian for the best price he could get and then went home on the proceeds. Banfield, who is one of the Austrian aces, sold the hangars, gasoline, etc., and then got a job as C.O. of the new Jugo-Slavic squadron to be established.

*PORTO CORSINI, December 7*

Of course our new front idea was speedily washed out by the German surrender. We were ordered to return to Porto Corsini and take up our usual duties which consist at present of looking



## BARTOW READ AT PORTO CORSINI

for ships which insist on getting lost with all hands until someone flies over and reports their positions. Today one of our people is out looking for two ships that are aground somewhere about twenty miles north of here. I wish these Wops would learn to navigate without running into their own coast or getting blown up in their own mine fields. At the present rate the mine fields will be pretty well cleared up in a week or so, but they manage to lose a ship almost every time they explode a mine.

Yesterday I went to Pola again. This time it was a peaceful excursion and I spent the day looking over the aviation station and strolling around the town. It was very interesting. The inhabitants seemed rather peeved at us because they had missed a good deal of sleep on moonlight nights. Also some few had lost their houses. One bomb landed behind a statue of Franz Joseph's wife and put a hole in the lady, but didn't hurt anybody else. From a naval point of view the harbor is about the best I have seen anywhere, with the water so deep that all the battleships can be tied up right next to the town. In fact you can step off the village street into about twelve fathoms. One of the big battleships which was sunk near the harbor mouth went quietly out of sight at her moorings and does not even form an obstruction now. In the harbor are all the Austrian battleships, some Japanese destroyers, a French cruiser and two destroyers, a British cruiser, and a big batch of Italian war vessels and all kinds of colliers and cargo boats. Well, I'll tell you all about it when I get home in February.

On November 11, 1920, the Secretary of the Navy forwarded the following letter:

SIR:

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the NAVY CROSS to Lieutenant RUSSELL B. READ, U.S.N.R.F., for services during the World War as set forth in the following

### CITATION

For distinguished and heroic services as a pilot of a seaplane engaged in patrolling the waters of the War Zone, escorting and protecting troop and cargo ships, operating against enemy submarines, and bombing the enemy coast, showing at all times courage and a high spirit of duty.

For the President  
JOSEPHUS DANIELS

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

The following extracts are from the Fitness Reports,  
Navy Department:

Period from 1 April to 24 May, 1918:

Ensign Russell Bartow Read while attached to this station has given excellent service in all duties assigned him. He is an expert Pilot of seaplanes, being most active, daring, and always willing and anxious to keep flying. He has had far more experience in actual flight than most officers of his age and rank. He is recommended for promotion to the next higher rank, that of Lieutenant Junior grade.

W. M. CORRY  
*Lieutenant, U.S.N.*

Period from 30 September to 31 December, 1918:

The following active war flights were made by Lieutenant (j.g.) R. B. Read, U.S.N.R.F., while attached to the U.S. Naval Air Station at Porto Corsini, Italy. He has participated in 35 submarine patrol flights, in addition he made 4 bombardment and one reconnoissance flights over the enemy base at Pola, Austria. This pilot has a total of 91 hours and 57 minutes in the air from July 24, 1918, to December 1st, 1918, flying Macchi 5 chasse, Macchi 8 bomber and F.B.A. bomber seaplanes. Excellent war pilot, hard worker, consistent leader of both chasse and bombing patrols. A splendid chief pilot or chief instructor, a bit too young to assume command or carry out important independent duties — 20 years old.

W. B. HAVILAND, *Lieut., U.S.N.R.F.*  
*Commanding Nav. Air Sta., Porto Corsini, Italy*

## CHAPTER XLIV

WITH McILWAINE, BEACH, AND AMES

Of the dauntless seven who had crossed the Atlantic together and learned in London a few things about wearing swords, McIlwaine and Beach may appear to have become lost in the shuffle since we said adieu to them at Moutchic. From all directions the members of the Unit were converging to join the Northern Bombing Group as the desired goal. These two were invited to take part after the customary instruction period at Clermont-Ferrand. McIlwaine remained perfectly amiable under Army discipline and regulations, unlike the more impetuous Ingalls, as previously quoted, and makes no mention of demerits or being kept within bounds. He appears to have been a model pupil.

When they reported to Lieutenant Gates at Dunkirk, Freddie Beach was detailed to 218 Squadron, R.A.F. near Calais, and Archie McIlwaine to 217 Squadron operating DH-4s from the old Lafayette Escadrille field at Crochte. In Beach's party were Ensigns Moseley, Bassett, Johnson, and their observers. While at this station they flew in almost a dozen bombing raids over the German bases on the Belgian coast. It was a hard-working squadron which sometimes made two flights a day, with five or six hours in the air for the crews and at least two of them spent in a hurricane of anti-aircraft fire.

At that time most of the German fighting planes were further down the lines, as Freddie Beach relates it, 'and they bothered us only now and then. We always flew in close formation and had a good chance of driving off an attack until some of our escort could come up. The bomb-

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

ing itself was pretty crudely done as the sights were not of the best and the pilot had to drop them besides keeping in formation, dodging the "Archie," taking care of his motor and watching out for enemy planes. Beyond doubt, he was a fairly busy bird. Our machines were DH-9s with Siddly-Puma motors of much too small horse-power. They were fast on the level and handled beautifully, but climbed sluggishly and, when loaded, their ceiling was far too low for comfort. The British pilots in this outfit were youngsters of from seventeen to twenty-two — nothing sluggish about them — a nervy, reliable bunch and always full of pep.'

Late in August, Beach was transferred to the immense American naval aviation base at Pauillac to test the Liberty motors which had just then begun to arrive. He found Kenneth MacLeish there and together they played the rôle of mechanical experts, pulling the Libertys down and making changes and additions which their practical experience suggested as necessary. They got on agreeably with the officers in charge and made a success of their work. They had many complimentary things to say of the Liberty motor, after they finished tinkering with it.

Beach left Pauillac on September 2d and went to the Eastleigh base which was then commanded by Lieutenant Chevalier. It was just at the trying time when the transfer from British to American control was in progress. Very anxious to rejoin Gates and the Dunkirk show, Freddie found a friend in Lieutenant Chevalier who was good enough to arrange it. There was a brief delay at Autingues on headquarters duty.

Gates had a snappy assignment waiting. The French Spad squadron known as l'Escadrille de Saint-Pol was sadly in need of pilots. In fact, it had none at all. The commander, Captain Delsalle, was delighted to welcome Beach, Moseley, Van Fleet, and Campbell. It was a case of



FRENCH MECHANICS, SPAD SQUADRON AT ST. POL, DUNKIRK



FREDDIE BEACH AND 'DI' GATES GETTING READY FOR PATROL





## WITH McILWAINE, BEACH, AND AMES

'Lafayette, we are here.' They were given new Spads, marvelous machines in their eager eyes. It was what they had been hoping for and they resolved to make the most of it. 'I shall never forget with what pride and enthusiasm we crawled into our machines,' exclaims Freddie, 'for our first patrol over the lines, and the good humor with which we took the bawling out from the French C. O. who thought our flying atrocious.'

'Di' Gates had been practicing in a Spad and could handle one with confidence and skill. He joined the flights of the Yankee Escadrille de Saint-Pol, one of which Beach describes. The story finishes on a heartless note. It shows how a young man, regarded as quite humane on the Yale campus, can become incredibly calloused by the influences of war:

On one of the patrols, the four of us Americans went up, also two French enlisted pilots and the French captain. We were ordered to do what they called the middle patrol which was about 14,000 feet up. While climbing up there we saw some Huns diving but we couldn't get anywhere near them. The clouds were in the way. When we reached our 14,000 feet, the clouds were still heavy and hanging in fringes. Meanwhile the Huns were also climbing and we caught glimpses of them above us. We were then fifteen or twenty miles back of the German lines in Belgium. The two French pilots had dropped out with motor troubles.

I happened to be flying with Gates at the rear of the formation. Looking ahead, we noticed that the French captain and two other Spads ahead of us had dived. This startled us. We glanced upward and saw a plane right over our heads. It was somewhat disturbing to see it come bolting out of the clouds. I recognized it as a new German plane, a Fokker D-7, which was then a novelty.

Casting a pallid gaze behind me, I was even more astonished to observe twelve or thirteen German planes bursting out of the clouds. It was their habit to fly in squadrons in this area. They had some biplanes with tremendous speed on the level and first-class diving qualities, also a type of triplane which was much

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

superior to our Spads in climbing. I noticed that on this occasion they were after us with both kinds.

The rest of our squadron disappeared into the clouds in front of us. This left 'Di' Gates and me with a very lonesome feeling. I saw him go into a spin and streak down back of the German lines. I perceived that the dozen hostile planes were directly behind me, so I did a spin on my own account. Our machines were very good at getting away when you were in a hurry. They dropped like a stone. I was never so scared in my life. I had a great many thoughts while I went whizzing down a great many thousand feet.

When I came out of the dive, which was a plain act of Providence, I was fairly near the ground and not awfully far from the lines. I recovered my breath and my courage and flew madly about to find the rest of the squadron. Not a soul in sight! And 'Di' had vanished with the rest of them. Poor fellow, he had been hit or had failed to come out of his spin. It was rotten luck. I sailed back to the hangars, but found no Gates. My fears were confirmed.

I felt rather badly about it until I remembered that he had recently purchased a large box of cigars and had been a bit stingy with them. So I went to his room to rummage about for the cigars, and there he was — Artemus L. Gates alive and in the flesh! He loosened up with the cigars after that, and every evening for a couple of weeks we would smoke up and tell each other how scared we had been.

It was quite another matter for Freddie Beach when Gates was actually missing on October 4th, while they were flying their last patrol together. With spirits subdued, he continued the duty with the Spad squadron until November 1st. The German forces in Belgium were withdrawing from the coast until the lines were as far away as Ghent. This was beyond the effective range of the French and British combat patrols operating from the Dunkirk area.

Beach tarried at Autingues and then became a bona fide naval aviator for a little while. He was sent north to the Grand Fleet to join the *Texas*, of Rear Admiral Hugh Rod-

## WITH McILWAINE, BEACH, AND AMES

man's Sixth Battle Squadron. There were no planes on board, which made it a little difficult for him to figure out why a flying officer was assigned to this duty, but with Van Fleet and Johnson he solved the problem by spending most of the time ashore at Turnhouse, the flying base of the Grand Fleet. Here the British officers were delightfully cordial and provided their American guests with Camel planes and told them to fly when and where they felt so inclined.

They were extremely fortunate in being on board an American battleship to witness the surrender of the German High Sea Fleet. This was one of the great dramatic spectacles of the World War. Fortunate? As a spectator in the front row, Lieutenant Frederick Beach was fairly riddled with luck. And he rode home all the way to New York in the U.S.S. *Texas*, with a stop at Brest to take on aeroplanes.<sup>1</sup>

Archie McIlwaine had no reason to regret his sojourn

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

LIEUTENANT (J.G.) CHARLES F. BEACH

Period from 20 September to 30 September, 1918:

An excellent pilot and officer. Very careful and reliable. Made a very good record while attached to 218 Squadron, R.A.F., for six weeks on bomb raids over the lines. A student of Aeronautics and a good knowledge of mechanics.

ARTEMUS L. GATES, *Lt. R.F.*

*N.A.S. Dunkirk, France*

Period from 5 September to 13 September, 1918:

Very good pilot, very capable.

G. DE C. CHEVALIER, *Lt. Cdr. U.S.N.*

*N.A. Repair Base, Eastleigh, England*

Period from 16 October, 1917, to 6 February, 1918:

Ensign Beach was appointed engineer officer of the station. Upon his arrival he knew little of the characteristics of French motors. He, however, applied himself and not only became master of his subject in a very short time but developed a group of mechanics who were excellent and able to handle any ordinary repairs to motors. All testing of seaplanes came under his jurisdiction as well as their assembly and the excellent work performed by his men in record time deserves mention.

G. C. DICHTMAN, *Lt. Cdr., U.S.N.*

*Commanding Moutchic-Lacanau*

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

with the British 217 Squadron. His summary is admirably compact. 'In all, I was in enemy territory twenty-six times, had four fights — brought down one Hun (not officially credited), strafed trenches once, and in short, had a devil of a good time.' A few pages from his personal log, or diary, will afford glimpses of this young man's idea of a devilish good time.

*Raid. 6-8.30 P.M. July 29, 1918*

Lt. Berthe leading. My position 1st right. Very misty. Climbed from 2000 to 8000 in dense fog. Two rear planes dropped out. Bombed Mole at Zeebrugge. No hits observed. Archies did not spot us until we had dropped and turned. Then they put up some good ones, behind leader's trail. Uneventful home trip.

*Sea Patrol. 5-6.30 P.M. July 30*

Lt. Shaw and myself. My position to rear and right. Dense fog at 1000 to 2000 feet. Went entirely by compass. Ran upon four Hun destroyers. We were less surprised than they. They fired usual Very pistols, white turning into red. We bombed at 1700 feet — they zigzagging. Shaw scored hit on stern of leading destroyer. I bombed the second one, but Rourke did not see bombs as he was emptying machine guns on their decks. Intense anti-aircraft fire.

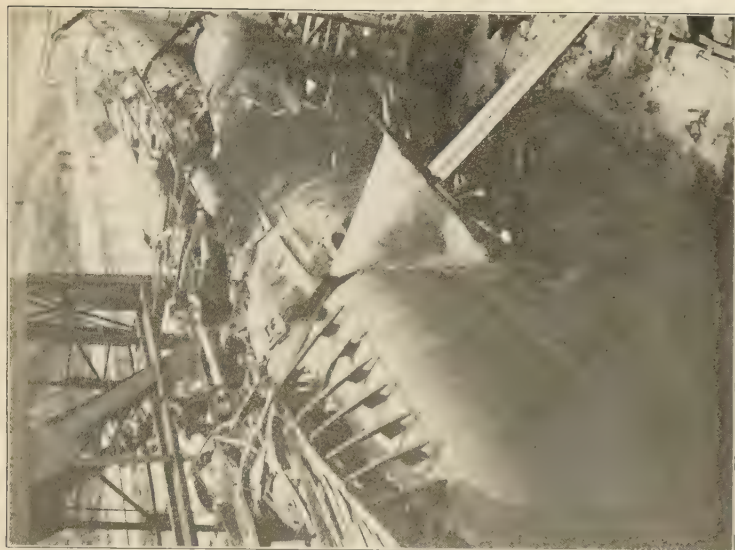
*Raid. 1-3.05 P.M. July 31*

Capt. Boyd leading. My position 1st left. Climbed to 14,000 and bombed seaplane base on the Mole at Zeebrugge. Immediately after releasing, met five DH-4's which we at first took for Huns. Archie was concentrated on them, not on us, thank the Lord. On return trip saw two British destroyers dropping depth-bombs on subs and seven of the American seaplanes hovering around.

*Sea Patrol. 5-7 A.M. August 3*

Shaw leading. Very misty weather prevented good patrolling. So we went on over Middlekerque and dropped our bombs on Hun depot headquarters. Large fires were seen to break out. In clear weather we should not have been able to do it on account of the Westende Battery.





GERMAN DESTROYER AND SUB HIT BY ALLIED BOMBS IN BRUGES HARBOR



## WITH McILWAINE, BEACH, AND AMES

*Sea Patrol. August 5*

Special patrol, as high water prevailed on inner channels for subs. None sighted. I had motor trouble and flew back to drome and got another plane. Failed to locate Judge, my patrol leader. Noted large fire between Nieuport and Ostend.

*Raid. 1-3.45 P.M. August 10*

Shaw leading. My position 1st right. Objective Zeebrugge. Came up with sun at our backs, 13,500 feet. Six hits out of ten bombs. Archie scarce, due to sun. One burst just off my wind. No perforations.

*Sea Patrol. 6.30-8.30 P.M. August 12*

Shaw and myself. Spotted five seaplanes off Zeebrugge. Prepared to attack when five land machines came at us. We fired at long range and veered off with three of the seaplanes while the others followed us. We soon outdistanced them.

There was another merry session with a flotilla of German destroyers which contributed to McIlwaine's idea of a good time. He suggests that it may 'add a bit of local color to an otherwise humdrum narrative' (his notion of what is humdrum being rather odd to a looker-on):

One morning six of us started on patrol just before daylight, getting off in pairs at ten minute intervals. Our duty was to sneak up along the Holland coast and return, skirting the three-mile limit, past Walsherein, the mouth of the Scheldt, Zeebrugge, etc., and try to spot certain submarine movements which had been reported to us on the preceding evening.

The sun was up and fiery red as we rounded Holland and flew toward the Mole. We noticed a number of black specks on the surface and went down to inspect. Then we made out twelve destroyers convoying four submarines. They were, if anything, inside the three-mile limit of the coast of Holland. As my companion plane and I had been the first to take off, we decided to wait until the other four planes should arrive and attack in concert. Soon one pair came along, and then the other.

Up to this point we had not been seen by the flock of German surface craft. As we approached them with the sun at our backs, they spotted us and began to break formation and zigzag. Anti-aircraft and pom-pom stuff began whizzing up, but as yet no-

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where near us. My partner and I piqued down, firing our forward guns in a stream to make the sailors on deck take cover, and as we drew nearer it was funny to see them tumble down the hatches and companionways.

When five hundred feet up, we released our bombs and flew off at right angles, doing twists and turns to dodge anti-aircraft fire which had become pretty thick. The other planes followed us and we soon met and continued on home to report and send out more planes. My partner scored a direct hit on the bow of one destroyer which, we learned from the report of a later patrol, had to be towed back to the Mole.

The daily life of the British squadron appealed to McIlwaine as having none of the hardships of war. In fact he seemed to think his entire career as an aviator 'pretty soft.' He goes on to say:

If we were going on patrol in the morning, we slept on the field the night before. Then if the weather was favorable and everything in good shape, we were awakened to partake of our oatmeal, eggs and coffee, and the indispensable jam or marmalade. Sauntering out on the field, we waited until the motors were warmed up and we had received our instructions. Then away we sailed. It was distinctly *de luxe*. In fact, the Unit had found it pretty much that way from start to finish, including Peacock Point, Palm Beach, and Huntington.

The British had been in the war long enough to understand that aviators were not infantrymen and that they had to be handled differently, that flying was a test of nerves, a sport for which you had to be kept fit. Shave in the evening, take a hot bath, get your shoes shined whenever you liked — a perfect snap.

There was one amusing adventure while I was day bombing. It rated a hearty laugh. A little Canadian named Shay and I were assigned to bomb the German headquarters at Middlekerque, about fourteen miles east of Neuport where their lines passed through to the sea. It was a foggy day and the clouds were very low. We found our target and were only 250 feet above the buildings in which the brains and strategy of the German army staff were supposed to be concentrated. Shay dropped a bomb and I let one go. We noticed a couple of fires break out.

## WITH McILWAINE, BEACH, AND AMES

Then we turned so as to get a better mark for our second bombs. Just then there came striding out of the building to the terrace a large, fat German war lord in his nightshirt.

It was unusual to see a German general parading in such a costume as this. Of course we tried our best to bomb him out of his nightshirt. But a lot of machine guns were trying to pot us by this time and we were flying mighty low, as I say, so we couldn't be as careful as we wished in depositing our last bombs. However, we did put the fear of God into the German general and he beat it from the terrace with the tail of his nightshirt standing out straight behind him.

When I was an innocent little boy, before I went to college and fell into bad company and joined the Unit, my mother took me one time to the Casino at Ostend. And I played roulette for small stakes, just as a pastime. When I was out on one of these patrols along the Dutch coast, we went over Ostend to drop our bombs. We were not very high up and there were five Hun sea-planes sitting on the water. Our patrol leader wagged his wings and we followed him down to try to bag these birds, but they rose too soon and flew over the land and escaped. It struck me as a diverting thought that as a kid I had played roulette in the Ostend Casino, and here I was a dozen years later flying about over this same Casino on such a very different errand. Life, indeed, consists of one thing after another, and there you are, what, what?

On October 14th, McIlwaine was detached from his congenial 217 Squadron and ordered to headquarters duty with the Northern Bombing Group. He made one trip to Eastleigh to pilot a DH-4 for delivery to Captain Hanrahan's force at Field 'E.' On December 7th he was transferred to the U.S. Army Aeroplane Station at Orly, France, where his duty was the delivery and installation of planes for the aviation equipment of the battleship *Texas*. This took him to Brest to meet the ship there and to remain on board. She touched at this port on her way home from service with the Grand Fleet. Freddie Beach was riding along and these two comrades of the Unit worked together in putting on board two Camels and a Sopwith



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which were to be flown from the turrets. Eddie McDonnell was in charge of the operation and took passage in the battleship in order to test out the scheme and perfect the details. He hoped to be able to make a flight when the *Texas* entered New York harbor, but a snow storm thwarted him. This was the first American battleship to be equipped with scout planes for spotting and observation.

This was Archie McIlwaine's first opportunity to be with the American Navy at sea, and he was tremendously impressed with the smartness, efficiency, and discipline of a first-class battleship. He paid it the compliment of saying, 'It was a beautiful machine and made me take off my mental hat to our regular Navy.'

Such had been the verdict of Admiral Sir David Beatty as conveyed in his farewell speech when Rear Admiral Rodman's ships were homeward bound from the Grand Fleet:

I want, first of all, to thank you, Admiral Rodman, the captains, officers, and ships' companies of the magnificent squadron, for the wonderful coöperation and the loyalty you have given to me and my admirals; and the assistance that you have given us in every duty you have had to undertake. The support which you have shown is that of true comradeship; and in time of stress, that is worth a great deal. You will return to your own shores; and I hope in the sunshine which Admiral Rodman tells me always shines there, you won't forget your 'comrades of the mist,' and your pleasant associations of the North Sea.

This message is worth repeating. There were times when the members of the First Yale Unit felt inclined to be critical of the naval organization of which they were a part. They were apt to forget that aviation was an unfamiliar and untraditional kettle of fish. It was important to winning the war, but, after all, secondary in importance to the duties and responsibilities which the United States Navy had to undertake in its own native element. And,

## WITH McILWAINE, BEACH, AND AMES

forgetting the flaws and blunders in the creation and sudden expansion of their own branch of the service, the rest of the Unit heartily echo the words of Archie McIlwaine, 'Hats off!'<sup>1</sup>

Somewhere during the complexities of establishing new air stations and bombing the daylight out of the enemy and knocking the tops off the Alps with balky Capronis, an engaging young officer by the name of Allan Ames has been circulating here, there, and everywhere. Abroad he continued the habit formed at home, where he had been seeing America first, alighting briefly in Texas, New Orleans, Dayton, Washington, Norfolk, and other points of interest. A desk in the Navy Department enslaved him for a little while, but he pried off his shackles in time to sail for England on July 13, 1918. In London he reported to Atlee Edwards who had been selected as Aviation Aide on the staff of Admiral Sims. 'Alphy' appears to have had no trouble with his sword.

As a result of the interview he was sent to Paris, in high hopes of being actively connected with the Northern Bombing Group in the field. Eddie McDonnell made superhuman efforts to bring this about, but there was

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

Period from 16 October, 1917, to 6 February, 1918:

Ensign McIlwaine as chief Pilot has fulfilled all his duties in a most satisfactory manner. At the time of his arrival in Moutchic the majority of the pilots knew little of the theory of flight and might have been classed as 'aeroplane chauffeurs.' He took them in hand, and expended much energy in laying out courses for study for them, also lecturing to them. The ground and flying which he established were excellent.

G. C. DICHMAN, *Lt. Comdr., U.S.N.*  
*Commanding Moutchic-Lacanau*

Period from 1 July to 30 September, 1918:

Has not come under my observation except for a very short period on special detail at Paris when he performed his duties in a very able manner. He was previously attached to active British Squadrons in the field for training as pilot. Is an exceptionally fine pilot.

D. C. HANRAHAN, *Captain*  
*Commander Northern Bombing Group*

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nothing doing. An officer answering to Ames' description was needed at the Naval Aviation Headquarters in Paris. Thither he sadly wended his way while McDonnell and Harry Davison bade him good-bye on their way to Italy. Harry reveals what might be called the human side of Lieutenant Ames in a couple of pastels in prose, to wit:

With the exception of two little episodes in France and England, I remember nothing of interest on the other side. Just after we landed in France, Alphy, Eddie McDonnell, and I were in a train compartment going from Havre to Paris. The train was very crowded, so some Belgian Red Cross nurses came in and sat down with us. We soon started up a conversation with them. After talking a while, I noticed that the prettiest one had fastened her gaze on our Alphy. Finally she leaned over and touched his eyes with her hand and exclaimed that he has *such* wonderful eyes. No one but a woman had a right to such wonderful eyes, said she. Alphy blinked and stared out of the window.

The other episode happened in London. Alphy took me to a dance at the Grafton Galleries the night after the Armistice was signed. We knew nobody in the crowd, but this never stopped Alphy for a minute. About midnight I saw him suddenly wave to a girl on the other side of the room [Of course Alphy maintains the girl waved first]. She rushed over to him and they immediately began dancing. After half an hour or so, I got a chance to ask him who she was and where he had met her. He had never seen her before, he blandly replied, and had no idea what her name was. A perfectly nice girl, but completely fascinated, as I doped it. About one-thirty in the morning I got tired of being the waiting bystander and told Alphy I was going home. He was still turning up the maximum revolutions. What a man!

Lieutenant Ames had a sterner side. Duty and he were twin brothers. In Paris he was in Operations under Lieutenant Fearing whom he considered 'a corker.' Yearning to shake that loose foot and be on his way, Allan concocted so many excellent reasons for sending him to the front that Fearing dubbed him 'the Bolshevik.' Persistence scored. The Operations section encountered delays in organizing



ALLIED BOMBING, BRUGES



GERMANS INSPECTING 'DUD' ENGLISH BOMB





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itself which offered a valid excuse for Lieutenant Ames to obtain general travel orders that he might visit all the American naval air stations in France. This he did, making an extended tour before returning to Paris to report his observations. The effect upon the other members of the Unit whom he chanced to meet was very beneficial. The sight of 'Alphy' was enough to buck them up and to restore them to the best of spirits. Having passed along, as welcome as letters from home, he was sent to London, on August 24th, to shoot a few rays of sunshine into the headquarters at Grosvenor Gardens.

Of course he used those general travel orders to stop over at St. Inglevert and say howdy to Bob Lovett and his other friends, and then walked in on 'Di' Gates and the Dunkirk crowd. At this station he instigated a personally conducted visit to the British battle front. With him, in an official flivver, went 'Shorty' Smith and the naval doctor. They went through Poperinghe to Ypres where they were under shell fire and Alphy called it the best day he had enjoyed in the war. They saw a company of American doughboys going up to the trenches and watched British batteries in action.

On the morning I arrived at Dunkirk [he informs us] I was sitting in the C.O.'s office and 'Di' was signing some reports. There came a terrific roar as if several shells had arrived simultaneously. The building shook itself almost off its foundation and the few window panes that were left went A.W.O.L. My cap was spun around three or four times on my head. Nearly all the expensive fillings in my back teeth were started. 'Di' never missed a stroke of his pen. I don't remember that he even looked up. When the tremors had subsided from my voice and knees, I asked, in what was meant to be a careless manner, how about this Dunkirk earthquake? Gates, the man of iron, replied that at ten o'clock every morning they exploded all the mines that had been swept up in the channels and collected. Nobody paid any attention to it.

All the hangars and buildings had been shot ragged with shell

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

fire and bombs. One long-distance shell had dropped plunk in the middle of the station. When that happened I suppose 'Di' turned in his chair and said 'come in,' thinking that somebody had knocked at the door.

At our other stations I had heard of the splendid work he was doing at Dunkirk, and the same thing was told me by his own officers. There was a remarkably fine spirit among his personnel. I was proud of the fact that he was not only one of my friends but also one of the Unit.

He arranged it so I could cross to England in the 'duty destroyer' which carried mail and naval passengers between Dunkirk and Dover. It was a rough trip but a sadder experience awaited me in London. Bad news! No service at the front for me! I was anchored to the aviation outfit at Headquarters and there I stayed until the finish. Captain Cone and his staff moved from Paris a few days after I reported. After he was injured in a torpedo steamer between Holyhead and Dublin, Lieutenant Atlee Edwards took his place. I was still under Lieutenant Fearing who took charge of what they called the 'Planning Section.' It was really another name for Operations. I assisted him and also developed the intelligence work in so far as it was of use to our office.

This brought me into personal contact with the staff officers of the Royal Air Force and with some of the people in the Admiralty. I shall never forget their courtesy and kindness and sincere endeavors to coöperate in every way possible. Knowing so much more of the game than we did, they were always patient and generous. I never did stop fidgeting to get to the front, but those months in London were very interesting, nevertheless.

It would be wrong to leave the impression that I stayed in one spot like a barnacle. There were little trips to break the routine. After a few days in London, for instance, I went out to Hendon and had a flight with Captain Hucks, R.A.F., in a DH-10. He was the first English flier to loop the loop. In this flight of ours he tried a loop in a DH-10. I stayed with it. Soon after this I had the pleasure of flying over London in a Handley-Page.

Afraid that I might get rusty for lack of practice, I was attached to a British pilot's school at Dartford, through the efforts of Charley Fuller. The field was only an hour from London so it was possible to run out there quite often. This was a bright spot

## WITH McILWAINE, BEACH, AND AMES

of my period of duty in London. There were Camels, SE-5's, DH-4's, DH-9's, and Avros, and I was allowed to fly any type of machine I liked and as long as I wanted to. The C.O., Major Clark, an Australian, and his officers couldn't have been more cordial to their own people.

I made one trip to Killingholme, Commander Kenneth Whiting's big station which was running like a clock. I had a good time with 'Lotta' Lawrence and Frank Lynch who were doing great work there. I visited Dunkirk and the Northern Bombing Group twice more. The first time was before 'Di' Gates was captured. This was not eventful. During the last visit, however, shortly before the Armistice, Captain Hanrahan very kindly let us have a Cadillac and we set out from his headquarters near Calais. The Germans had evacuated the Belgian coast and we went to Lille and Menin, then up to Bruges, Zeebrugge, and finally past the last Belgian guard on the road leading to Ghent, where we just escaped being made targets for a Hun machine-gun.

At Zeebrugge it was fascinating to go out on the Mole with a British naval officer who had been in the show with Captain Carpenter and the *Vindictive*. Of all the stories of the war, this thrilled me most. It was a German squadron from this seaplane station which had shot down 'Al' Sturtevant. After seeing the fortifications and machine-gun implacements, it was marvelous to think that the British vessels had been able to make their landing and partly block the canal.

On October 4th, I called up 'Di' Gates from London and 'Shorty' Smith answered the phone. He told me 'Di' had gone out with a French Spad squadron and had been missing for several hours. I can truthfully say that I never wavered in my belief that the old Indian was going to come out of it alive. It looked pretty dark at the time, I will admit. The official report, of course, did not come in for several days. Meanwhile I called up Bob Lovett and other friends in the Northern Bombing Group. The Sunday following 'Di's' capture was the longest day I ever spent in my life while we waited in London for a message from France telling us the results of the investigation.

Several days after 'Di' disappeared, 'Ken' MacLeish came to London. He told me he was going to relieve Dave Ingalls who had been with an English squadron near Dunkirk. 'Ken' didn't know it, but he was on the last lap of his road to glory. And I

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didn't know it when we shook hands and said au revoir in London.

To be perfectly honest, I think that my contribution toward helping to win the war in London failed to amount to a hill of beans. I continued to be the most pestiferous 'Bolshevist' at naval aviation headquarters. It was a great satisfaction, however, to work directly with Fearing, Charlie Fuller, Roger Poor, and with Guggenheim, Ellsworth, Captain Cone, Atlee Edwards, and the rest of them.

The contribution of Lieutenant Allan Ames to the record of the Unit amounted to a good deal more than the 'hill of beans' at which he appraises it. In his Fitness Reports you will find him praised by his superiors as 'an officer of exceptional ability, reliable, and thoroughly capable of any duty he may be called upon to perform.' More than he may have suspected, he was also a morale officer overseas, for wherever he went his personality, his enthusiasm, and his devotion to the task in hand left their imprint.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

LIEUTENANT A. W. AMES

Period from 1 October to 19 November, 1918:

A very good and conscientious and capable officer.

*Lieutenant Commander W. A. EDWARDS, U.S.N.  
Aide for Aviation, Staff of Vice-Admiral W. S. Sims, U.S.N.*

Period from 29 July to 30 September, 1918:

A very capable officer.

*Lieutenant G. R. FEARING, U.S.N.  
Planning Section, Headquarters, Paris and London*

Period from 27 April to 28 June, 1918:

Lieutenant Ames is an excellent pilot and is extremely conscientious and thorough in the performance of his duties.

*Captain N. E. IRWIN, U.S.N.  
Director of Aviation*

Period from 24 December, 1917, to 18 February, 1918:

The officer reported upon herewith, is one of exceptional ability, reliable, and thoroughly capable of any duty called upon to perform commensurate with his rank. Highly recommended for Foreign Service.

*WM. MASEK, Lieut. U.S.N.  
Commanding Naval Air Station,  
Bay Shore, L.I.*



## CHAPTER XLV

### DAVE INGALLS, THE NAVAL ACE

MEANWHILE, in the summer and autumn of 1918, the elaborate plans of the Northern Bombing Group were progressing, with Bob Lovett in command at St. Inglevert and 'Di' Gates making a reputation at his Dunkirk station which he found so 'enjoyable' in spite of such trifles as the daily risks of being bombed and shelled into the middle of next week. And no one was prouder when Dave Ingalls, the freshman still in his teens, flashed so brilliantly across the sky during a brief period of opportunity whose duration was less than two months.

What more this boyish 'Naval Ace' might have achieved in longer service at the front is, of course, mere conjecture. The hazards of the game might have eclipsed his career, as it befell Kenneth MacLeish. On the other hand, if the gods of destiny had decreed his survival through one or two years of combat in the air, it is quite plausible to assume that he might have enrolled himself among the foremost knights of aviation. To be exact, he began his spectacular flights on August 13th, 1918, and made the last of them on September 24th. On October 3d, he was relieved from duty with the British 213th Squadron and MacLeish took his place.

Within the space of six weeks, therefore, Dave Ingalls earned the British Distinguished Flying Cross and the American Distinguished Service Medal for one 'brilliant and courageous' deed after another, a citation testifying that 'alone and in conjunction with other pilots, he shot down at least four enemy aeroplanes and one or more enemy balloons.' Is it not worth noting in this connection that Guynemer required six months in which to bring



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down the first four enemy planes of his prodigious score? All this time he was getting into his stride. He was considered extraordinarily youthful and yet Dave Ingalls was the younger by a year. Said the colonel of French infantry who had witnessed Guynemer's first successful combat:

'How old are you?'

'Twenty.'

'And the gunner?'

'Twenty-two.'

'The deuce! There are nothing but children left to do the fighting.'

Lieutenant Ingalls was sent to the British squadron 'for experience,' he explains. He first joined on July 9th and stayed for two weeks in which he made bombing flights to Ostend, Zeebrugge, and Bruges, but had no encounters with the enemy. He was very keen about 218 R.A.F., which was in charge of Major Wemys and thought it the most efficient day-bombing squadron in the area. 'A full-out crowd' who bombed every day of decent weather. The squadron consisted of three flights, two of which usually went up together with an escort of Camels or Dolphins.

They flew in a V formation, like a flock of wild geese, twelve or fourteen machines, climbing to their ceiling which was about fifteen thousand feet. At this altitude they proceeded to the objective through a furious Archie fire which shot holes in the machines. Ingalls was getting into the spirit of it and learning rapidly when he was called away to tackle the drudgery of flying field construction for the Northern Bombing Group. One hangar was dutifully erected 'in a terrible mud hole' and then two captains of Marines came along to take over the job.

Ingalls went back to Dunkirk, on waiting orders, praying for something to turn up. For a week or more he hung about as a guest of 'Di' Gates and pestered him to intercede with Captain Hanrahan and have him restored to his



ANTI-AIRCRAFT AT BRUGES



GERMAN CONCRETE SUBMARINE SHELTERS, BRUGES



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beloved 213 Squadron. This permission was granted on August 9th. It was the beginning of his sensational tour of duty. By way of prefacing his own story, which he tells with much vivacity and color, a summary prepared and given out for publication by the Secretary of the Navy will serve to present the essential facts in their proper order.

The long flights along the British, French and Italian coasts, the patrols far out to sea, the combats with enemy aircraft and submarines form one of the most brilliant chapters of the war. A volume would be required to relate them all. I tell here only the story of the first naval ace, who may represent the courage, daring and efficiency of our aviators who wrote a new page in naval history.

Lieut. David S. Ingalls was attached to the Northern Bombing Group in Flanders. While aircraft were arriving from the United States to equip this group, Ingalls was assigned to Royal Air Force Squadron No. 213, with whom we cooperated in bombing German submarine bases. Ingalls began his spectacular performances on the 11th of August, 1918, when in company with a British officer he shot down a two-seater machine in a running fight over the German lines. Zipping through the upper air at 120 miles an hour, by the skillful maneuvering of their planes the allied fliers were able to get in several bursts from their Lewis gun on the tail of the Germans, whose machine crumpled up, burst into flames and fell to earth. Ingalls' machine did not escape without its share of punctures, but luckily nothing was damaged which interfered with the functioning of the motors.

On the night of August 13, 1918, Ingalls flew over the German Airdrome at Varsenaere, and dropping to a point where his plane nearly touched the ground, sprayed 450 rounds from his machine gun into the wondering Teutons, who were making desperate efforts to get him with their 'archies.' Swinging in a wide circle, he again swooped down on the hangars and let loose four bombs in the midst of things, putting out searchlights, scattering Germans and musing things up generally.

On September 15th he repeated at the German airdrome at Uytkerke the stunt he worked at Varsenaere. Flying low he rushed out of the clouds upon the German hangars and fired 400 rounds from his Lewis into the light canvas structures, and with

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the upward swing of his plane he cut free four bombs upon the Fokkers grouped on the field below.

On this raid Ingalls was the leader of a formation of five in a wing of twenty Camels, and on the return from Uytkerke he sighted an enemy two-seated Rumpler going west from Ostend at an altitude of 6000 feet. Ingalls and Lieutenant H. C. Smith turned out of formation, swung in over the shore and attacked. The Rumpler turned and dived toward Ostend, the Camels following. Firing 400 rounds from ranges of fifty to two hundred yards they chased the enemy plane down to about 500 feet just off the Ostend piers, when the Rumpler went down out of control, burst into flames, and crashed just off the beach.

On the 18th of September Ingalls made one of his most brilliant flights. In company with two English pilots in Sopwith Camels, he sighted a kite balloon at about 3500 feet elevation near La Barriere. Crossing the coast line the Camels attacked, firing about ninety Buckingham tracers each.

The Germans began to reel in the kite, the Camels following it down to about 500 feet altitude, when two observers were seen to jump with white parachutes. Ingalls gave the balloon another spraying with tracer bullets and it burst into flames.

Three balloon hangars were observed at this station, and as the flaming balloon fell it landed on one of these hangars, which in an instant was ablaze. There was an explosion and the fire spread to the two remaining hangars, destroying the entire station, while the flames were visible as far as Nieuport. All the Camels were badly damaged by machine gun and anti-aircraft fire, but they reached their base in safety.

On September 22d, Ingalls, who, in company with four other Camels, flew all over Flanders, committing depredations on German hangars and ammunition trains, dropped four bombs on the German ammunition dump at Handezeame, and blew up a number of wagons loaded with shells. Later he flew over the ammunition dump at Wercken and landed four bombs on a large hut filled with explosives, setting it on fire. Swinging around over the railway station at Thourot, where the Germans had an enormous supply dump, he made two accurate hits. On the way back, being the fourth trip for the day, Ingalls dropped four more bombs on a horse transport, and he and his companions got in enough good bursts from their machine guns to account for some twenty-five Germans and thirty-five horses. It was



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work of this kind that won for Ingalls his British Distinguished Flying Cross. During a test flight on September 24th, Ingalls, in company with another Camel, sighted a two-seated Rumpler over Nieuport. Both Camels attacked, following the Rumpler very close, Ingalls and his mate getting in two bursts of 200 rounds at 100 yards range. Driving the enemy to a tailspin, Ingalls followed him down to 600 feet, when the Rumpler burst into flames and quickly crashed.

For the entertainment of his father and mother, Dave Ingalls took pains to add to his letters such vivaciously written chapters of description as the following, which he called, 'An Ideal Low Bombing Raid':

For almost a week the members of the squadron had been sitting around waiting, apparently in vain, for a good day when we and several other squadrons were to bomb a certain aerodrome. For the first few days every one rather welcomed the dud weather which had just come on, as a low bombing raid means coming down to within fifty feet or so to the earth, some twenty or thirty miles over the lines, which fact is rather disturbing to even the calmest and coolest pilots, but after a time we became restless and impatient to get the job done with.

So that it was rather a relief when the C.O., who had just been conversing with two of the flight commanders that had been testing a couple of machines in spite of the low clouds, entered the mess and announced that luncheon was to be served in half a hour, eleven-thirty, and we were to bomb the aerodrome. Only one squadron, as the weather was fine for a few machines to slip over the lines, was to drop through a break in the clouds, do their dirty work and get back safely in those clouds.

Upon hearing this, a few of the pilots, just out of the schools, hurried out to go over their machines, while the rest, well aware that all a pilot could do in the hangars was to get in the mechanic's way, gathered around the maps and discussed the different routes. A few minutes later the C.O. called a meeting and bringing forth larger maps and photographs, decided upon the leader, and fixed a particular target — a hangar hut or workshop — for each pilot, likewise detailing a man to shoot up the two or three machine-gun emplacements to be seen on the photos. Previous low raids had been done in a more haphazard manner,

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and this time we wanted to 'bring home the bacon' as Shakespeare did not say.

By the time each man knew his objective and place in the formation, lunch was served, all but a few heads acting in a rather hurried and nervous fashion. Luncheon over, we adjourned to our respective flight hangars, to don a helmet and gloves, and some to stuff a tooth-brush or small pistol in a pocket; at the same time every one left behind all papers, letters, etc., which might be of value to the enemy in case one was captured.

Then I walked out to my machine. All R.F.C. mechanics are remarkably fine and efficient men, so I had complete confidence in mine, which is a comforting thing to have, and questioned him about a few faults in the machine, which I had told him about after the last flight. Of course he had attended to everything and was now occupied in cleaning the wind screen and brushing the seat. We got on board and the motors were started.

When their engines were warmed up and tested, the pilots took-off, flight by flight, the first three falling in behind the leader's flight. The leader climbed rapidly through a clear space in the clouds out to sea, where one and all tested the two guns with which the machines are armed. He then headed up the coast some ten miles out to sea, about 4000 feet just above the clouds which were at about 3000 feet.

The trip up to a spot opposite our objective seemed unusually long, as there was nothing to do but sit and wait. Finally, however, he turned towards shore, and I who was leading a flight which was to bomb a number of workshops which were slightly to one side of the aerodrome, drew up parallel to the leader. Fortunately the clouds were thick over the coast and no Archies came up. As we crossed the leader dived down, followed closely by all, through a break. As we appeared to their view the Archies started and it was mighty close, as the Huns had heard us and also had the range of the clouds, at our altitude. But not even the Hun Archies can hit a squadron of machines diving almost vertically down, and in a few seconds we were too low for them, tearing along at about 200 feet toward the junction of a canal and a railroad near our aerodrome — a landmark previously noted.

As we approached the aerodrome we slowed up and came down to about 100 feet; if lower one would be injured by the exploding of one's own bombs underneath. The hangars and huts were

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wonderfully placed for us, all in two lines wide enough to make a miss for almost any one an impossibility.

Getting a fine aim at my shop, I pulled the lever loosing the four twenty-five pounds carried, and looked up just in time to see one flight almost over us let go their bombs evidently at a perfectly smooth field beyond. I hoicked around so as not to be hit by the crazy beggars, and looked back to hear a continuous 'wonk wonk wonk' — practically the same sound an Archie makes when it bursts near one — to see a great number of direct hits on targets, and other explosions all around, except for the bombs of the flight which dotted the afore-mentioned field with beautifully spaced little holes.

Turning back, I dove, firing at two lorries standing near the shops, and, as I again hoicked away, I became aware of the sharp 'pat-pat' of several machine-gun emplacements firing from the ground. Being almost over one machine-gun emplacement, I looked in, but it was empty. Some one else was firing at the other machine-gun emplacement, while all the other machines, but two, climbing rapidly into the clouds, were diving and zooming around the aerodrome shooting like wild men. Why no one is hit by a pal is something I cannot understand.

I looked around for something to shoot. There were no men about nor any machines in the field, so I tried to puncture several huts. With these speeded-up guns one can fire an incredible amount in a slight dive from say 150 to 250 feet and it is very satisfying to see the tracers going into the roofs in a long line, an occasional one ricocheting off as it hits something at an obtuse angle. This time I could notice tracers coming from at least three machine guns but couldn't see where from.

By this time most of the machines were leaving, as there was really nothing worth while left to shoot up, so I flew over once more, and tried to locate correctly all the hits and two fires which were burning fiercely. At the far end of the field, as I was headed on a farm house, I located two of the machine-gun emplacements which were shooting at me, their tracers coming pretty close in spite of the maneuvering I was doing to escape them. I didn't see them in time to fire and as when I left I could see no other planes, I started after them, looking at several farm houses about the doors of which the whole family, Belgians of course, were heartily enjoying the spectacle.

Reaching 1000 feet in no time I was taken note of by some

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Archie batteries, and so began turning, zooming and climbing to get to the clouds as quickly as possible. Those clouds looked mighty like a home to me. But now I got a shock, my engine almost cutting out, hitting at the most on three cylinders. I started on a gentle glide, looked at the gauges and switches, and tried running on the gravity tank, but no luck. So I looked around for a smooth field from an altitude of about 500 feet, and in the midst of Archie bursts. Then cheerio, the doggone engine grew better, though not best, and I encored my journey to the clouds, reaching them just before going over the coast, and disappeared therein. When I came out again into the clear sky I saw only one machine near, the others had almost disappeared in the direction of France. But this one turned back and I recognized one of my own flight. We waved happily, and set out at an easy pace for home, till I saw six Huns overland coming our way, but they never saw us and they turned off to one side. At which we both breathed easier.

By this time we were opposite Ostend, and again I saw a Hun, seemingly a two-seater climbing out of the clouds, probably thinking to get the last man ahead of us. S. and I put the helm over and edged in behind him, hoping he would further out to sea. This he did, and thinking that he'd have to turn getting back, I opened up and started after him. At last he saw us, turned and dove back for Ostend, but we gained on him and soon opened fire at 400 yards. His observer was evidently new at the game, or killed by one of our shots, for I saw no tracers coming back. We continued to dive and shoot, he finally reaching the clouds. I was only 150 yards behind now, so followed, coming out of the clouds almost over Ostend piers, luckily right behind the Hun. One good burst and he caught fire, so I hoicked off swerving, to dodge the land M.G.S. from the shore. A last look showed him crashing into the water by the beach, and S. joined me above the clouds. He had seen the Hun burst into flames and crash through a break and we went home rejoicing.

A minute later the Commanding Officer, who on seeing the Hun and scrap, had turned back, joined us and waved. A few minutes later we climbed out of our machines and hurried into the Records Office to report. Here we learned that two fellows had been wounded, one slightly, the other had three shots in his arm and leg, but all machines had returned. After the tension, every one was feeling in great form, kidding one another and





GERMAN HANGAR DESTROYED BY ALLIED BOMBS



GERMAN SHEDS





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confirming the damage done. The reports and the official photos, taken next day, proved the raid to be one of the best done so far.

It is even more entertaining to hear Dave Ingalls talk about it. Gabriele d'Annunzio describes in a novel the friendship of two young aviators whose mutual affection, arising from a similar longing to conquer the sky, has grown in the perils they dared together. One of them is killed. For the other 'the beauty of war had diminished.' A phrase of singular significance and insight into the heart of such an airman as Dave Ingalls. The beauty of war! Thus it appealed to his ardor, to his imagination, to his love of adventure. Spared its butchery, monotony and squalor, he could envisage war as something truly beautiful so long as it vouchsafed him its aerial excitements and escapes and the extreme tests of skill and daring. This is the spirit in which he narrates:

The individual's life with the squadron was exceedingly pleasant. Ten days' official leave was given once every three months and 48 hours' leave could be obtained from the C.O. at any time, except during a push, or any important 'show,' as the British term anything out of the regular line of duty. The squadron of eighteen or twenty machines was divided into three flights, each flight having ten days on duty and one off, on which day the men were encouraged to leave the aerodrome, flying off to some neighboring squadron or visiting Dunkirk. During the summer the beach was always crowded with people, the continual bombing and shelling having little effect on the inhabitants.

Those on duty, when not actually away on patrol, spent their time shooting — from the machines, or with rifle and pistol — or loafing about the mess reading and playing cards. The quarters and food were of the best, and when at home one was indeed far removed from even a thought of war.

The great amount of shooting of every sort that was always being done was pretty good proof of the importance of good marksmanship in aerial fighting. To be sure the absolutely necessary requirement is good eyesight, for if one sees the Huns first one can either easily escape if outnumbered, or perhaps so

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far surprise the enemy as to actually shoot them down before they are aware of the presence of hostile aircraft. The third requirement of course is actual flying ability. It seems strange that this should be secondary to marksmanship, but to get Huns one must be able to hit them, and it is surprising how well some men can shoot. This was forcibly brought home to me at the very first when three of us dove at a two-seater spotting over the lines. We were all together in the dive, and before I thought we were within range, the Hun suddenly burst into flames, the flight commander having hit him from what we afterwards agreed must have been at least 400 or 500 yards.

Now in regard to the actual work. There were several sorts of patrols. First, the sea patrol which consisted in flying low, always in sight of the fleet, to guard against seaplanes during the coastal destroyer patrols up to Ostend and Zeebrugge, or during a shoot. As there were very seldom any enemy seaplanes to be seen, and as one always looked forward to a cold bath if the motor failed, this was rather a stupid job, never preferred to line patrols.

Of these, in good weather, there were usually two a day — at the time when the Huns were out en masse — between ten and twelve in the mornings and five and six in the evenings. At these times always at least two flights went, one above the other for protection. Two large groups made the most confusing affair imaginable; machines of friend and foe seemed to be everywhere. Twice I remember seeing two Huns collide, with the most gratifying result. In bad weather there were small patrols, perhaps under the clouds along the lines, or up the coast to look for some daring seaplane merchant, for the Hun seaplanes were fond of bad weather. Between the regular patrols any one who wished could go out by himself, or more often persuade a couple of pals to accompany him, on a search for lone two-seaters spotting or photographing near the lines. Besides these patrols there was considerable escort work to be done, accompanying day bombers to Bruges, or some other objective. But this too, was monotonous, for the Huns would not often attack such numbers, thirty or thirty-five machines.

Ever so often bombing raids on Hun aerodromes or on the Mole at Zeebrugge were carried out. These were very interesting and can probably be best illustrated by the description of one in particular. One of the most successful was against the Varsennaere Aerodrome, which was about twenty miles behind the

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lines, southeast of Ostend and used for day scout and night bombers. For the bombing, Camel squadrons were picked, with a Dolphin squadron above as protection. One squadron of Camels were to carry phosphorus bombs, which set fire to anything near on exploding, and the rest were to carry the customary twenty-five pound shrapnel bombs. Certain parts of the aerodrome were assigned to each squadron as its target, and certain hangars or huts assigned to each man.

After several false starts, the show finally began about half an hour before sunrise on what turned out to be a perfect day, for the Allies. There was considerable confusion in getting off in the dark, as a Camel is a difficult machine to fly even in the day-time, but finally every one was climbing toward 10,000 feet at which altitude we were all to meet at a certain time over Dunkirk. As one went up, the dawn grew brighter and at 10,000 feet it was possible to make out the other machines. The leaders of the different flights were firing signal lights to help their men get together, just as the sun became visible over the horizon, and eventually all fell into line in their places. Then the leader flew along the coast until midway between Ostend and Zeebrugge, where he turned toward the land, diving across the shore line.

The Huns were evidently asleep, and no Archie was put up until all the machines were down to about 200 feet, roaring over the country towards the objective, which was by this time plainly visible. Now the squadrons split up to fly over their parts of the field, and descending to about 150 feet, dropped their bombs. The shrapnel bombs cause a ghastly looking explosion and the phosphorus give out clouds of smoke, so the field upon looking back seemed like a bit of Dante's Inferno.

Lined up in front of one row of hangars was a squadron of Fokkers with their engines warming up, from which, as we approached, men had run to shelter. Turning back toward these, we all dove, setting many machines on fire, and riddling all of them with bullets. For several minutes all the machines were diving, zooming, turning, and shooting from every side resulting in a grand mêlée and many near-collisions. Finally the leader fired a Vêry light, the signal to return. Then the countryside appeared to be covered with Camels streaking for the lines at about 100 feet up. And now revenge was wreaked upon the Archie, for whoever saw the bursts from battery anywhere near him turned, dove and shot, driving the crews hurriedly to shelter

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and silencing every battery near their path. Soon the flock reached the lines where the remaining ammunition was expended at the Hun trenches, when all flew back to their respective aerodromes to compare notes and congratulate one another on their good luck. Fortunately no one was hurt and the reports together with the photos taken soon after proved the great success of the raid.

These large raids, of course, did not occur very frequently, as a large amount of their success depends upon the element of surprise, but during a 'push' the work was very much similar to this. For then the squadrons went over the trenches into Hunland, but at different times, so that there was always a squadron over the enemy's lines of communication looking for something to bomb. The target was not often determined beforehand, except when a large congestion of troops was reported, but the squadron flew about until something worth while was observed. The fact that the Huns were prepared for this bombing during a push, and that each man went on three or four raids a day except while his machine was out of commission, or he was waiting for a new one, and the great number of casualties caused this sort of work to be unpopular. But the good results obtained due both to actual destruction and to the effect on the Hun's operations made up for the drawbacks.

Thus, with its pleasant, luxurious life, and its lack of monotony due to the various fields of duty, surely flying is the most fascinating of all the branches of the service.

On my fourth day at 213, I went on two patrols, on which we saw no Huns. As I had had no flights yet, soon after returning from the second, about 4 P.M., I had my Camel filled with gas and oil and set out alone to see what was doing. When I had climbed to about 18,000 feet, which is a fairly safe altitude, I flew along over the lines between Nieuport and Ypres for about fifteen minutes. It was growing dark and I saw no Huns, only a few British flights at different times. Finally just before dark I decided to go down low and see if I could find a Hun two-seater spotting for some batteries. So I descended slowly till I reached about 12,000 feet. I had been looking below most of the time, and nothing had appeared anywhere so I was suddenly surprised by seeing three monoplanes flying parallel to me 500 feet higher and somewhat to the rear. They must have seen me, for they turned and dived. I was certainly disgusted with myself for



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being caught like that and of course started for the lines, diving a little.

In about thirty seconds, they got within range and began to shoot. All I could do was sit and watch them and turn from side to side and climb and dive slightly, trying to dodge just as one of them would get on a direct line with me. They kept coming on and tracers flew by on all sides. They would dive and shoot and then zoom up again and repeat. Finally they got very close, and as one turned off and started to zoom up to the right I turned at him and fired a few shots and quickly started home again. He immediately dove and beat it. When I straightened out, I could see only one and heard lots of shooting so I supposed the other was below shooting up at me. It was a rotten feeling. I couldn't see where the deuce he was and the shooting kept up. So I turned and dove and kept on and soon he appeared again on one side, above me. For a minute or two more they both stayed about fifty yards directly behind me, shooting, and then for no reason both turned and dove toward the ground. So I turned and fired at them, diving for a few thousand feet rather glad to shoot and not be shot at. But they outdove my machine and I didn't seem to hurt them, so I soon pulled up and started for the lines which were still about two miles off. That last two minutes was the worst part, for I kept expecting to hear some one shooting at me, as I didn't know how many more might have come up during our chase. So I sat turning round and round, looking above and below, really surprised that no one started to shoot. When I got back and saw the half dozen holes in the machine I realized that I had been a perfect fool. It was a good lesson, because when flying over Hunland I always felt so safe. Nothing happens, and you see no one, and it doesn't seem that there could possibly be any danger anywhere in the peaceful heavens.

*September 20.* Rather successful trip. At this time I was a flight commander at 213 and all three flights were sent out as protection to 218, a day bombing squadron. We set out when they telephoned that they had started, and climbed so that we all met over LaPaune at about 15,000 feet. On such trips, one flight of Camels went on each side and slightly above and to the rear of the day bombers, while the third flight flew about 4000 feet above us to guard against any Huns who might dive from above. We all went along the coast two or three miles out to sea and turned in between Ostend and Zeebrugge. Just after we

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crossed the coast and were being Archied, I was flying with my four members of the flight on the right side of the bombers. I saw four Fokkers coming straight at us from the right side, some distance off. We flew along for some time and then as they continued to approach I turned and headed for them, my flight following. We approached head on and I shot straight at their leader, turning and zooming just as we almost met. I could see the four Huns and two other Camels all lined up while my two last men had turned off and were some distance above, so I headed at one of the Huns and fired. He immediately dived, but I didn't follow, always having a dread of being caught low down over German land.

When I looked around now I saw only three Fokkers at a distance, some of the bombers way off, and one Camel above. As we ought to do our duty, I turned after the bombers to keep near them and protect them. The Fokkers flew about, but didn't come near. Soon the bombers started to return. One evidently had a poor motor and was below and behind the rest. I saw two of the Fokkers start for him, so I did, too. One of them was directly behind shooting at the bomber from about 150 yards, the other somehow had got a little ahead and as far as I could see was doing nothing. I approached at right angles and deciding that the first-named Hun was the most dangerous, fired at him from right. He immediately went down with smoke coming out of his machine, so I turned and started for the other Hun. He could not have seen me, for I got within about thirty yards and then had a perfect shot at him. I don't know how I could have missed, for I almost ran into him. He turned over on his back and went into a spin. I watched him go until he got very near the ground, when I heard some one shooting and saw about three Fokkers coming up at me and shooting from about 300 yards' distance. I immediately dove and fired at the nearest.

They all split up and dove off in different directions, so I immediately turned and started after the bomber, who was hurrying toward the coast. But as soon as I started out, the Huns pulled up and fired from beneath and behind. All the British machines had now crossed the coast and so I kept on after them, while these three beggars kept shooting from an impossible distance, until I crossed the coast. The first Hun I had shot at was officially confirmed as being destroyed in flames, but some one reported having seen the other pull up after spinning a long



GERMAN DESTROYERS AT BRUGES



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time and flatten out apparently O.K. Two of my flight had been hit in the gas tanks the first thing and had barely managed to get home.

On September 24th, a chap named Hobson and I went out about 5.30 P.M. to look for a two-seater spotting or photographing. This was the closest shave I had, wherefore it is interesting to me. We flew along the lines at 15,000 feet for some time, got disgusted and started for home, as it was getting dark. As we left the lines I saw some Archie over LaPaune and there picked up a machine heading toward Ostend on our side of the lines. I fired my gun to attract Hobson's attention and set out in pursuit, for Archie on our side of the lines meant a Hun. Hobson finally woke up and started, too, but at some distance behind. I got within range between Newport and Ostend, a mile or so inland. The Hun was an old Rumpler, the slowest I ever saw, and he just kept on, so I dove under him and came up from below. But he was so slow that I overshot and could not train my guns on him. So I dove again and tried once more. He would turn one way to give his observer a shot and I would try to keep under him, making a bigger circle, so his observer could not shoot. A few seconds, and I tried to come up below him again, but his machine was too slow again and I almost overshot, but succeeded in firing a few rounds from just beneath.

Nothing happened, so I dropped and continued working for a good position, completely fed up at not being able to get one. On a turn he very nearly got me for before I could make the outside circle his observer fired probably ten shots, the tracers all going by between the struts on my left side. We were only ten yards off at the time and I could see the two Huns perfectly in their black helmets, and it was rather fascinating to be so close. All the time we were getting further over the lines, and I was getting madder. So I gave up the careful, cautious tactics, got straight behind him, and kept firing for probably 100 rounds.

At last a big puff of smoke came up like an explosion and I felt fine. I turned and dove down to the ground to chase myself home, for when way over the lines and not high enough to be safe from Archie, the stunt is to race along just over the ground at about 200 to 300 feet. I had not seen Hobson anywhere. I got near the ground south of Ostend and tore along watching and hoping that no Huns would dive from above. The only danger in this low flying is from the machine guns. The Huns had these



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

scattered all over their country to get aeroplanes in similar predicaments. I knew fairly well where they were thickest, and went along for at least five minutes without a shot. Then suddenly I heard a rat-tat, my motor stopped, gas poured out of the tank below the seat, and clouds of white vapor rose from it.

The machine was thrown into a sort of dive and when I pulled on the stick I found that the elevating controls did not respond. I switched on the gravity tank and the motor picked up just over some trees and as the Camel is very tail-heavy with motor on, the nose came up and I missed the trees by inches. I found that the wires to go down with were O.K., and that the rudder worked, but the ailerons answered very weakly. But the motor kept hitting on about six of the nine cylinders and I went along all right. Evidently I had run into a bad place, for I was shot at till I crossed the lines. Usually one turns, zooms, etc., when in this predicament, but I expected the rest of the controls to go any second and even with what I had I could not do any trick flying, so I sat still and by using the rudder kept going as fast as possible in little turns toward home. It was a big relief to get out of shot across the lines. Then I had to land. I didn't dare go up high, but flew down low experimenting with the machine and seeing just what I could do. When I reached the aerodrome I came in slowly over the trees on the side and using the motor, managed to land.

The machine was well shot up. One burst of several bullets had perforated the tank under my seat, and all but one strand in the wires that cause one to go up were severed, as well as a number of strands in those to go down. One aileron had been hit at a hinge, and of course there were a few holes in the wings. Hobson had returned. He said that he had been back of and above me and had fired a lot from there and had seen the Hun burst into flames and crash, so we felt fine, and I got a new machine next day.

*September 18.* Yesterday while flying along the coast, I noticed particularly the enemy kite balloon which in good weather is always up near Ostend for observation purposes. And it looked like such easy meat that when we returned to the aerodrome I suggested to the flight that we go get the beggar. Although only one fellow in the squadron had ever tried for a kite balloon, they all fell for it immediately, so this morning three of our flight asked the C.O.'s permission and filled our guns with in-

## DAVE INGALLS, THE NAVAL ACE

cendiary tracer bullets. Another flight having offered to escort us, six machines started out about 10 A.M.

A thick layer of clouds covered the sky at 8000 feet, so we flew down the coast just under them, followed by the gallant escort. Opposite Ostend we turned in and nosing over slightly, to get up more speed, approached the kite balloon in a big curve. Not until we had almost reached the coast did the Archie open up, but then as we were only 7000 feet up and they had plenty of time to get our range, it was some Archie. One shell, in the very first burst, broke just under my right wing, through the fusilage in front of my knees, a piece of the cowl striking me on the knee and giving me quite a start.

The Archie on this coast is about the best the Huns have, and the gunners must certainly have enjoyed themselves during the two or three minutes we were diving toward the kite balloons. The Huns were pulling it down as fast as they could. We got to it at about 4000 feet, all diving at different angles. We all fired, but nothing happened. I turned and dove again, shooting at the big, fat target. Looking back I saw a blaze flare up in the bag, and then it crumpled in a great mass of flames and dropped directly on the three balloon sheds which promptly caught fire. It was a lovely sight. '*Beaucoup bon*,' thinks I, hearing no machine guns and seeing no Huns anywhere in the sky. A minute or so of peace and quiet and then I saw a machine racing along abreast of me, about a mile off and at the same altitude of about 200 feet. This gave me quite a start, as I thought it meant a scrap, but presently I recognized it as Smith's machine, he having dived into the rumpus with the rest of us, so I joined him and we jogged along for home. On the way I happened to notice a lot of German barracks, wooden buildings among trees. Our incendiary ammunition was just the stuff to pull off a surprise party, so I fired at them and was delighted to see them smoke up. I must have hit some straw or something like that to touch 'em off in such elegant fashion. We were machine-gunned from the ground, but nothing to worry about. Ducking it, we reached the pleasant atmosphere of home.

We counted the holes in our planes and reported that the excursion had been successful. Our observers and photographers discovered that the burning balloon had lit up the three enormous sheds in which extra balloons were stored and burned them to the ground. The General commanding our forces was

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

quite bucked up and called up our C.O. to say how pleased he was. September 28th, the Allied push started, and our squadron was compelled to do low bombing and shooting up behind the enemy lines. On the first trip we started early in the morning of a rainy day with a strong wind. The entire squadron, with bombs attached, went up at once, in three flights. We climbed to 4000 feet and as we got near the lines we dove gently so as to arrive at about 300 feet up on the other side. Due to the confusion and hurry of the German troops, our machine gun work was excellent. On the main road to the front, near Thourout, we saw a complete artillery train. Our leader dived and we followed, loosing our bombs. The execution was terrible and the whole column was demoralized. Then we stayed around, diving at the remains and shooting horses, men, etc. Two teams broke away, dragging their caissons, and raced along the road with four or five of our planes shooting at them till they crashed together and the pile was shot up.

Most of the Germans that were left ran into the fields and hid behind trees, but one fellow showed pluck. He unhitched his team from a smashed ammunition cart and led them calmly into a field and quieted them down. No one shot at him as soon as it was seen how bravely he carried on. One of our pilots saw the German major in charge of the artillery train galloping down the road at full speed. The plane chased him almost a mile, shooting at him all the time, until finally the horse was hit and the major flew about twenty feet in the air and lit on his bean in a ditch full of water, probably ruining his tunic. We cheered one chariot race, two teams of four horses each, with no drivers, and the guns bounding along behind them, tearing abreast along the road until they crashed furiously.

Amusing things do happen, even in war. On another raid, the C.O. was chasing a poor bloke who was legging it on a bicycle for dear life. Pretty soon this German blighter hopped off the road and ducked behind a stone wall to hide like a rabbit. When the C.O. banked around to see where his quarry had gone, the fellow up and heaved a brick at him. It smashed a tremendous hole in a wing of the plane. Imagine a man stoning an aeroplane!

During these two months I flew 108 hours, 45 minutes; 63 flights over the lines; 13 combats; 2 low bombing raids on aerodromes; 1 low bombing raid on the Mole; 10 low bombing raids behind the lines during the Allied push.

## DAVE INGALLS, THE NAVAL ACE

### *Letters from Dunkirk*

Sept. 18, 1918

DEAR DAD:

I have been a bit busy lately, so haven't written. It has cleared up for a while the last few days, so we have flown a bit. Day before yesterday we had another low bomb raid on an airdrome and it was a great success. We blew the place to pieces literally, from about 150 feet.

Unfortunately two of our fellows were wounded but not seriously and got back. On the way home a fellow named Smith and I got a two-seater. I conceitedly think I got him, as I followed him down through some clouds, and saw him burst into flames after a burst at him. Altogether it was a *bon* show.

The next day we had lots of flying, but had only one scrap, four of us with six Huns, but they all got away by spinning down, we being unable to follow them as we were escorting some bombers. Then this morning I led my flight, note the nonchalant way I say my flight, over the coast and we got a kite balloon in flames, pretty nice, eh? It was very pretty; just as it caught fire the two observers jumped with beautiful white parachutes. Luckily the burning balloon fell on three hangars underneath and there was some fire. We contour-chased home just over the ground, and I managed to set fire to some barracks some way behind the lines.

This afternoon we saw no Huns, weather becoming very dud. Much to my regret I received orders to leave here the other day, and am afraid that as soon as the regular flight commander returns I'll have to go — to what I know not.

Yesterday afternoon we had a dance, given by two American nurses who are stationed here. There were French, English and American girls, talking all sorts of languages, so you may imagine the times we had. And, my Lord, but the French and British girls do dance most strangely.

Sept. 20

MY DEAR MOTHER:

Yesterday was awfully dud, so there was nothing doing, we just sit around and play bridge most of the bad days. But yesterday the C.O. had to go and arrange a dance for Tuesday, so we went auto riding, as it were.

To-day was fairly good. This morning, we went out and had



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

a scrap, and I got one, confirmed, and one other, whom I am sure I hit perhaps in the engine, for he went down about 10,000 feet out of control, then, so someone else says, levelled out. But I hardly think he'd have gone down so far if not hit. That is the trouble fighting so far over the doggone lines, one can't always be sure, and you are usually too busy to see if a fellow crashes after a long dive or not.

I've got a slick flight now, and am awfully sorry I'll probably have to leave here soon. There are only three of us just now — the others are away and so we usually borrow a couple more from some other flight, but when we three are out we certainly have a great time. Coming home, if we haven't separated, we practice formation flying, till now we come along the beach and over the aerodrome practically wing to wing. We always take off in formation and to-morrow are going to try landing in formation, — tho' the field is pretty small to do that.

Of course there is lots of rivalry among flights in getting Huns, and ours is ahead now. The balloon was also a help. Did I tell you that a day or so ago I saw Ken Smith, haven't seen him for a long time, you remember he was of the seven of us who came over together. It was great to see him again.

*Sept. 26*

DEAR DAD:

Day before yesterday five of us attacked seven Huns and got three crashed. I unfortunately didn't prove a thing, as at the beginning I saw a Hun diving down on one of our fellows' tail, and drove him off by long-range shooting. The Hun spun away and I was by that time out of the scrap.

After tea, being a little sore at every one else shooting down Huns and me not, I went out with another fellow, saw a two-seater, chased him over the lines and got him in flames. But as it was a long way over and low I had to contour-chase back, and was shot up by a land machine gun. So my dear old machine has been scrapped, and I have a brand new one. Yesterday the C.O., Brown, and I flew over to the American station about twenty miles from here, had lunch and tea, did a few stunts for them, and returned to find that four of our fellows are missing after a Hell of a big scrap. Mighty bad luck; our lads got only three Huns out of it. Tea is ready, so Cheerio!





GERMAN DESTROYER SHELTER AT BRUGES, STRUCK BY  
BRITISH BOMBS



GERMAN CONCRETE DUGOUTS ON THE MOLE, ZEEBRUGGE



## DAVE INGALLS, THE NAVAL ACE

### *Letters from Eastleigh*

Oct. 10

Yesterday I boxed with Frank Lynch and got plenty of exercise to last a week, as he is an old Yale end at football and somewhat strong. I was glad to find myself all there as we crawled into a wonderful hot tub afterwards. The mess is mighty good, but even so does not compare to the Ritz dinners we used to get at Dunkirk.

There is a great big band here, which beats anything I've ever heard. Especially the drum-major, he's a bear-cat. And just now a really wonderful quartet of the sailors has come in to use the piano in the mess room. Best music I've heard since leaving the States. Also there is a movie with American movies here every night.

I ask you 'Is war Hell?' How long I'll be here is one of the Navy mysteries. If I do decently it may be for some time. Also depends on when the navy starts day bombing. Besides, we have just heard that the forces are to be amalgamated. In that case I don't know what will happen to us in the Navy flying corps. Perhaps they will not unite in operations — merely in purchasing, etc. I hope so. Skinny Lawrence just wrote me. He is in the artillery and was at Chateau Thierry for the push. Somehow he managed to get into the trenches and was the fourth man over the top, and captured a Hun. Darn good for Skinny.

Blake is still training here in England, but hopes to get over soon. He wrote that two of my best friends at St. Paul's have been killed, Marshall Bond and Bobby Reath. And also Cord Meyer, the Yale crew captain, who was stationed near us at Dunkirk — a great fellow. Brew Jennings is likewise over here. He wrote from some destroyer or sub chaser he is on, and says he's been having a pretty exciting time.

The war news certainly is great. I hope they don't declare peace till we've knocked Hell out of some or all of Germany.

Oct. 16, 1918

On the night before he left, Reg Coombe and I went into Southampton on a party. We had a great time; having decided to see an awfully good show running there we had to slip dinner, so went in for tea, — high tea. The only way we could get enough to eat was to tour around the tea-shops, — reminded me of dancing between courses.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Yesterday Captain Irwin, in charge of naval aviation at Washington visited the camp with our old C.O., Chevalier. As one of the heads of the department I had to go around with him and make clear any little matters. Well, I hand it to him for asking the dog-gondest questions imaginable; he must have been an examination instructor at some school or college.

There is a young English lord here, more as a guest than anything else, tho' officially he is instructing us in guns and shooting. Well, the youngster took me out to dinner last night at the place where the dance came off the other night. It sort of worried me to find that he and I were to be the only guests, and in addition the poor nut got us there an hour too early by mistake, so we sat around waiting for Mr. and Mrs. and the daughter. But they were awfully nice and I had the time of my life. The old man was a quiet, respectable sort of a bird. Mrs. Morton was very amusing, and the daughter is the only English girl I have seen (or heard of) who can really dance.

Mrs. Morton kidded me quite clubbily about my accent, and I sympathized with the daughter who had never had a chance to go to school but had always had a governess. And after a dinner at which at least three wines, and little odds and ends like whiskey and soda, port, sherry, etc., were served, the old boy and I agreed famously that alcoholic drinks were an abominable sin.

*Oct. 29*

Yesterday we sent off some machines for France and several, owing to dud weather, landed at different aerodromes. So this morning I took a machine and, accompanied by an old navy man, a machinist, the funniest pirate I ever saw, flew over, stopped at the two aerodromes and saw that they were all right. One place was Shoreham, and I found the Major in charge was Cloete, the fellow who was my instructor at Gosport. It was darn nice to see him again. Besides him there were two or three other Gosport instructors.

There was one of the new British scout machines just arrived there, and Cloete let me take a ride in it, and I had the time of my life. It beat anything I'd ever been in by a million miles. It was only about fifty miles or so from here, going along the coast, so we got back in time for noon luncheon, tho' we didn't start till 9.30, made altogether seven flights and spent quite a time at each aerodrome. One can do a lot of traveling by aeroplane. I'm

## DAVE INGALLS, THE NAVAL ACE

planning to go to Shoreham for a dance in a week or so, leaving the plane in a hangar there over night. Great idea, isn't it?

Nov. 2, 1918

DEAR PATER:

As such, I have been informed by the royalty, I should address you. How do you like it, Dad? To me it sounds too religious, very much like calling on some Latin Saint. You see, last night Push Coombe and I dined again with the royalty, and I taught the daughter some American and she pulled off a few British methods. To-night we are going over again. Push is awfully fond of music and art, so he gives Mrs. Royalty a good time.

The weather has been about as bad as possible. Too bad to fly any machines to France, or even instruct these confounded ferry pilots. I tried letting one of them fly me the other day, me sitting in the observer's seat with a most inefficient stick and rudder. Well, he almost smashed us all up. It's a nice soft job they've slipped me. Last night it cleared up beautifully and I thought everything would be better, but this morning it has been raining hard continuously. Believe me, I will be glad to get back where the sun shines in the day time and the moon at night.

Well, we got one of the training machines set up yesterday and I took it up and had a time; it is an awful old tub but fine for instruction. It makes about forty or fifty miles per hour, I guess. Also there was about a forty-five or fifty mile wind yesterday, so at about 1000 feet the darned machine stood still in relation to the ground. I was afraid to turn with the wind for fear I'd never get home. It is the funniest aeroplane I ever saw — everyone collected around to see it fly and cheered when it took off. I most died laughing when I flew it. Some machine!

### *After the Armistice*

Nov. 14, 1918

DEAR MOTHER:

Things seem to be about over now, don't they? But the last few weeks are always the slowest. It's funny, here I've been here almost fourteen months and never worried much about going home till a couple of weeks ago. And it gets worse every day.

This morning Frank and Reg left, to sail at the end of the week with Mr. Davison and Harry. They are certainly lucky.



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Frank and Harry have been over only two or three months, I think, and they are the first to get home again. I almost slipped off with them, but I guess the Captain here thought he might have something for me to do, so he put his foot down. However (D.V.) a couple of weeks more ought to do the business up. But one never knows.

This morning I flew over to France and back between breakfast and lunch; it was a pleasant trip and enabled me to get the rest of my baggage, so I've just finished packing and am all set. I took my touring car again. It's a peach and we certainly did travel. Just one hour and eight minutes from Dunkirk to here. 'Tis a mystery to me why I am not tired to-night, as we had a great dance last night, sort of a peace party at the Mortons'. I got to bed about 3 A.M., in addition to which Frank and Reg pulled me out of bed at 7 A.M., being in such jovial spirits at leaving. Likewise I flew most of the afternoon. Don't expect to have much more flying now, as there is no use wasting petrol.

What do you think I did yesterday afternoon? Well, I am certainly ashamed. I crashed a D.H.-4 landing in a fancy way. Altho' we stuck where we hit, only radiator and wheels and props were broken. The entire absence of any real shock surprised me very much. I thought when one changed speed from fifty-five to zero miles per hour one might suffer at least a jar.

Two letters to-day from Dad through C.P.S. and a note from Miss Guthrie. I'm certainly sorry to learn that nothing has yet been heard from Ken. It looks mighty bad for him. Di will, I imagine, be with us in about a week now, as prisoners are given up immediately. Well, Muzzy, I am praying and hoping to be with you all by Xmas.

The official records, to round out the story of Lieutenant David S. Ingalls, include the following summaries of his awards for valor in action:

### *From the British Air Ministry*

25 October 1918

Force Commander, U.S.N.F.,

30, Grosvenor Gardens, London

LIEUT. (J.G.) D. S. INGALLS, U.S.N.R.F.

With reference to your letter dated 15th October 1918, asking to be furnished with a report relative to the destroying of enemy



HANDLEY-PAGE DOWN AT BRUGES



GERMAN WOUNDED



## DAVE INGALLS, THE NAVAL ACE

aircraft by the above named American Officer while attached to No. 213 Squadron.

I am directed to inform you that the following is the record of the act of gallantry for which Lieutenant David Sinton Ingalls has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross:—

On the 15th September, 1918, led a flight of five machines (in a formation of twenty machines) on Low-bombing raid on Uytkerke Aerodrome obtaining a direct hit on his target. On homeward journey, assisted by another Camel, shot down two-seater enemy aeroplane in flames. Has participated in two other Low bomb raids doing good work with bombs and machine-gun fire in each case.

Has helped to destroy two enemy aeroplanes (two-seaters) and once, single-handed, attacked six enemy machines, driving one down damaged.

Lieut. Ingalls also shot down an enemy kite balloon in flames near Ostend on 18.9.1918.

His keenness, courage and utter disregard of danger are exceptional and are an example to all. He is one of the finest men this squadron ever had.

V. LANSDOWN, *Major, Air Staff*

### *From the American Government*

SIR:

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL to

LIEUTENANT (J.G.) DAVID S. INGALLS, U.S.N.R.F.  
for services during the World War as set forth in the following:

#### CITATION

For exceptionally meritorious service in a duty of great responsibility as a chasse pilot operating with R.A.F., Squadron 213, while attached to the Northern Bombing Group, Northern France, where, as a result of his brilliant and courageous work he was made an Acting Flight Commander by the British authorities over their own pilots. Alone and in conjunction with other pilots, he shot down at least four enemy aeroplanes and one or more enemy balloons.

For the President.

JOSEPHUS DANIELS

*Secretary of the Navy*

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 23, 1919

FROM: British Air Attaché

TO: Lieutenant David Sinton Ingalls

MY DEAR LIEUTENANT INGALLS:

I write to inform you that I have in my possession the Distinguished Flying Cross to which you became entitled for gal-

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

lantry in flying operations against the enemy, and for which your name is listed in the London Gazette of the 19th of July, 1919.

I will either send the cross to you under registered cover, or at your choice retain it until the visit, early in November, of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, on which occasion he will himself present it to you.

I may say that the Prince has expressed himself as desirous of presenting these crosses, and other things being equal and your circumstances permitting, I hope that you will be able to accede to the latter alternative.

It was the pleasure of Lieutenant Ingalls to accept the decoration personally from the hands of the Prince of Wales, as one good sportsman to another.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

LIEUTENANT (J.G.) DAVID SINTON INGALLS

Period from 5 July to 30 September, 1918:

A most excellent officer and exceptionally good pilot. Good knowledge of aeronautics. Has been attached temporarily to 213 Squad, R.A.F., a British fighting squadron, since Aug. 15th and there has made an enviable record. His work has been spoken most highly of by the squadron commander, Major R. Graham.

ARTEMUS L. GATES, *Lt. U.S.N.R.F.*  
*Commanding U.S.N.A.S., Dunkirk*

Period from 1 April to 24 May, 1918:

Very excellent pilot. Very bold and aggressive, most promising.

G. DE C. CHEVALIER, *Lt., U.S.N.*,  
*Commanding U.S.N.A.S., Dunkirk*

Period from 21 March to 31 March, 1918:

Very promising. Excellent pilot.

G. DE C. CHEVALIER, *Lt., U.S.N.*,  
*Commanding U.S.N.A.S., Dunkirk*

Period from 21 December, 1917 to 21 March, 1918:

A particularly bright officer, greatly interested and thorough in all work assigned him, and a good pilot.

E. R. POLLOCK, *Comdr., U.S.N.*,  
*30 Grosvenor Gardens, London, Eng.*



## CHAPTER XLVI

### THE KILLINGHOLME PATROLS

WHILE these other members of the Unit were following the fortunes of the Northern Bombing Group in Italy, France, Belgium, and at the English base of Eastleigh, Frank Lynch and 'Lotta' Lawrence were entirely detached from them in the separate American organization at Killingholme. It was a station taken over from the British and expanded and carried on with very notable snap and efficiency by a large force under Commander Kenneth Whiting. It demonstrated what our naval spirit and style of doing things could accomplish when given the proper equipment and an adequate personnel. Atlee Edwards explains the British project which was tried and failed, and how the station was turned to other uses after it came under American control.

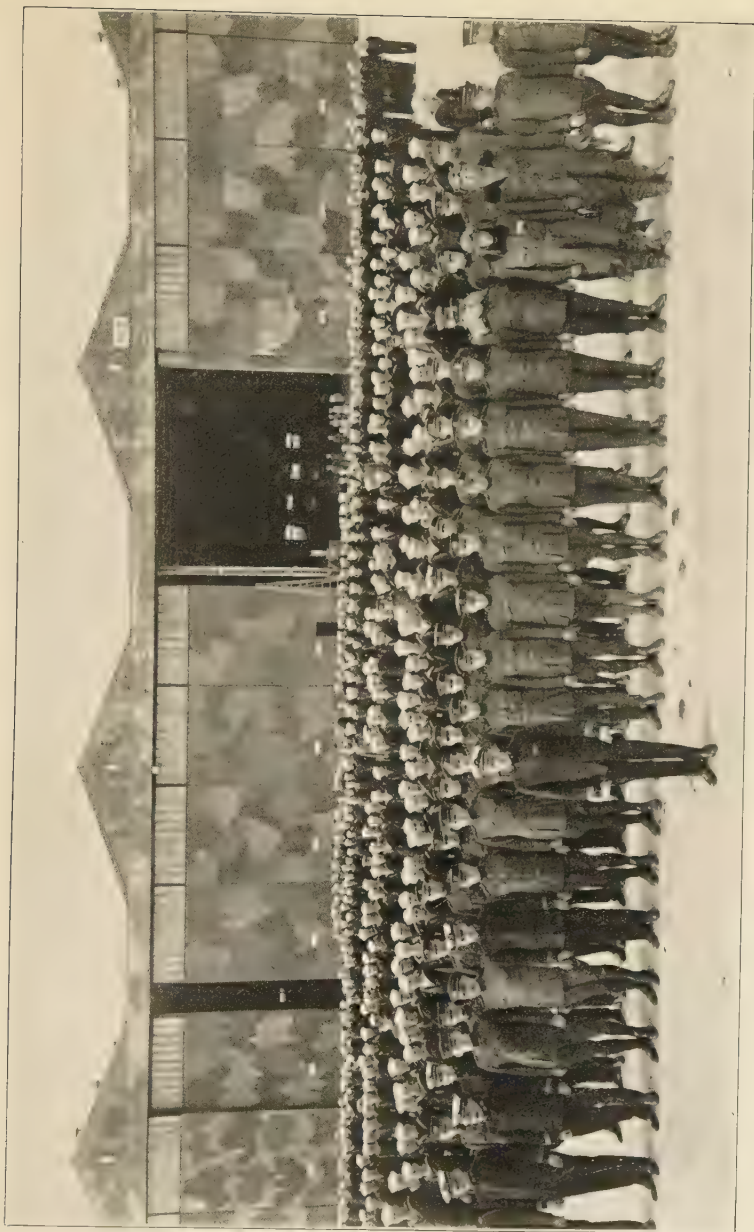
While the majority of our stations took part in military operations, the most active were those in England and Ireland, Flanders and the Adriatic. Of them all the one at Killingholme, on the east coast of England, near the mouth of the Humber, was not only the most important but in one detail the most interesting. The station was created for the purpose of trying out a scheme for raiding the enemy bases in the Heligoland Bight which had been originated by the British Admiralty. This was, in short, a scheme to transport seaplanes on lighters, or floats, towed by destroyers to within easy striking distance of Heligoland, Cuxhaven, Bremerhaven, Emden, and Wilhelmshaven. When the float had reached its station, it was given an inclined position by flooding a rear compartment, the seaplane rising from the deck. Although preliminary trials demonstrated the entire practicability of the plan, it was subsequently abandoned because of the fact that the British, in their enthusiasm, let the cat out of the bag by making a test flight in the vicinity of the

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Heligoland Bight, during which operation a Zeppelin took photographs thus destroying the element of surprise upon which the entire undertaking was based. Furthermore, after the fusion of the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps into the Royal Air Force the co-operative spirit between the army and the navy sank to a very low ebb, and when these lighters had been built the project had to be abandoned because the Admiralty decided that they could not spare the destroyers that were necessary for the execution of the project.

This experiment is further interesting for the light it throws upon the wartime psychology of the British; upon their will to victory. We all know of their strange and new devices for winning the war, which were successful; of their 'hush ships,' their camouflaged fleets and their 'Q' ships. These were successful, but few of us have heard of the many schemes proposed and tried out, often at the cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds, all to no purpose. Nothing, apparently, was too fantastic to be given a trial, and if it failed it was shrugged aside as part of the game.

The original Killingholme project was one of these wild experiments that failed, yet the success or failure of the original plan had no effect upon our subsequent operations there. The location of this base, situated as it was on the east coast of England, directly opposite the Heligoland Bight, was most important from a strategical point of view. It was accordingly developed as a base for ordinary aerial operations, becoming eventually one of the most powerful in existence, with 46 seaplanes and a personnel of 1928 men; 404 flights were made by these machines covering a distance of nearly a hundred thousand miles. Shortly before the Armistice was signed it was decided to reinforce this station with seaplanes that had been operating from our stations on the French coast. This was accordingly done, and had the German High Seas Fleet taken the seas it would most certainly have felt the pressure of American planes in the North Sea and we would have been in a position to judge of the value of aircraft in a naval action. The ease with which these planes were flown from France and housed at small improvised stations in the immediate vicinity of Killingholme speaks well for the flexibility of this arm of the service. Although it is somewhat of a digression from the subject in hand, it may be well here to invite attention to the fact that the fundamental principles of aircraft



PERSONNEL AT KILLINGHOLME



## THE KILLINGHOLME PATROLS

are the same the world over and hence in an Allied campaign they are interchangeable, which is a decided asset from a military point of view. We could fly British, French, or Italian planes with little or no preliminary training, but it is doubtful if we could have operated their vessels had the personnel situation demanded such an expedient.

The operations at Killingholme included convoy escorts, hunting submarines, long distance reconnaissance, and special patrols carried out in response to warnings. Under American command the period of actual war service was something less than four months, from July 20th, until November 11th. During this time it made the following records:

|                               |                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Sea miles patrolled.....      | 57,647          |
| Hours of flying.....          | 968             |
| Number of flights.....        | 233             |
| Average length of flights.... | 4 hrs., 10 min. |
| Number of ships convoyed..... | 6,243           |

Commander Whiting organized the force in two divisions, one consisting of all officers and men connected with flying and the beach, and the other taking in the rest of the men. The flight division was divided into two squadrons and they in turn into flights, a beach gang to handle machines, an armorers' gang, a machine shop gang, a carpenters' gang, a fillers' gang, and a boat gang to run the launches. There was also an intelligence department, a photographic department, a meteorological bureau, and a radio and electrical department. The other division consisted of the guard, the mess cooks, and attendants, all yeomen, general stores department, transportation department, medical department and a large construction gang of about 600 men who were erecting huts on the station to accommodate the largely increased personnel, which ultimately reached the total of over 1700 officers and men. The squadrons were divided into four flights each, each



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

having its flight commander. Each flight had five machines. Each machine had its crew of four men, pilot, observer, engineer, and radio man. In addition each flight had several spare engineers, wing men and general workers.

The most important task, at first, was to train more pilots. This was done by the experienced pilots while on actual patrol, and practice in landings was given while flying up or down the river to or from patrols, and it wasn't long before nearly all the pilots were qualified to fly big boats. Under Lieutenant Farrell, the gunnery officer, a school of machine gunnery was started and practice held every day. He also gave lessons on the use of the bomb sights and on the bombs themselves. There were also lectures on aerial navigation but this was mostly learned by actual practice at sea; there were lectures on radio and practice in signalling of all kinds. These courses were for both officers and men of the flying crews. Drills of various kinds, such as air-raid drill, fire drill, 'All away,' which meant every machine available was to be put overside, were held without warning at various hours of the day or night. The beach and hangars were under the supervision of a flight duty officer who stood a twenty-four hours' watch and he had under him a head officer who had charge of the gang which put the machines overside, a big job, requiring about thirty men for a machine. The flight duty officer received the orders for the morning's flight from the squadron commander the night before, turned out the pilots and crews and beach gangs, gave the pilots their orders, and saw that the machines got away on time. During the day he took charge of all operations on the beach and at the hangars, rounding up whatever pilots and crews were needed to stand by for emergency patrols. Patrols usually left at daybreak and again at noon, and were out from four to eight hours.

Frank Lynch and Francklyn Lawrence reported at the

## THE KILLINGHOLME PATROLS

station on June 16th, while it was still jointly operated by the British and American naval air services. They had been sent straight from Norfolk and Washington after having their curiosity excited by the mysterious references to a base camouflaged under the designation of '14 and 15.' Kenneth Whiting had been working on the plans in the Department for some time before he sailed in the U.S.S. *Jason* with a cargo of material and the first American built flying-boats to be used in foreign service.

To the two members of the Unit it was a most welcome sight to find Lieutenant Commander Kenneth McAlpin, M.C. ('Little Doc.') on duty at Killingholme where he was doing great work. This opinion of his services is part of his record in the Bureau of Navigation.

Period from 1 June to 30 September, 1918:

He has been in charge of the health of from 400 to 1400 men and has directed the work of two other medical officers one of the same rank and the other about to be made the same rank with apparent satisfaction and contentment.

K. WHITING, *Commander, U.S.N.,  
Commanding U.S.N.A.S. Killingholme, Eng.*

Period from 1 October to 2 December, 1918:

A most excellent officer in every respect. His retention in service would be very desirable. He is an exceptional medical officer, is very attentive to all details of duties, and is well versed in the duties of a Naval Medical Officer. He is especially qualified in internal medicine diagnosis and treatment, and has the highest respect of patients and personnel.

G. F. FREEMAN, *Comdr. (MC), U.S.N.*

Approved: K. WHITING, *Comdr., U.S.N.*

Killingholme had its baseball team which played matches with nines from the American Naval Aviation camps at Driffild and Grimsby, and the Army camps at Beverly and Doncaster. Track athletes competed in the British and Colonial meet at Stamford Bridge. Football

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

flourished, with stars from various colleges among the material, and Navy and Army fought it out on several occasions. The Earl and Countess of Yarmouth invited the officers to tennis and tea on Saturdays in the summer months and opened the grounds and golf course for their use. The station showed its spirit in going over the top for the Fourth Liberty Loan with the splendid subscription of \$164,250, or more than \$130 per capita for the total personnel of 1253 officers and men.

Frank Lynch's experience was active and interesting and he had no cause to complain that there was nothing doing. Having slung a facile pen in earlier parts of this history, he is hereby permitted to cut loose again:

We reported for duty at Killingholme on June 16, 1918, and were at once assigned to what was known as the War Flight, as distinguished from the 'Convoy Escort Flight.' The duty in the War Flight consisted of long reconnaissance work. Planes were usually sent out alone to cover certain areas in the North Sea. Patrols started at dawn, and some times even before the sun came up. The first leg usually took one out to sea for sixty or seventy miles where a spider web was done and a return made to the station. Patrols of this nature were worked out on the theory that there was a good chance of catching submarines up on the surface charging their batteries in the early hours of the morning preparatory to operations against north and south bound convoys later in the day.

It was my good fortune to find a German sub in this condition on my third patrol. I learned unofficially from a member of the British Naval Intelligence Staff that I had been credited by the British with its sinking, but received no report from the American Intelligence Department. On July 30th, while taking two pilots up to the British station at South Shields, where they were to fly back two Shortt planes, we sighted a submarine wake at a point about six miles due east of Flamboro Head. The sub was entirely submerged. On dropping both bombs on her wake, we observed large quantities of oil upon the surface and were convinced that we had either damaged or sunk the submarine. Having left off the wireless apparatus to make room for the two



'DOC' McALPIN AT KILLINGHOLME



LAWRENCE'S PLANE ON PATROL FROM KILLINGHOLME





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pilots we were carrying, and having no Aldis lamp on board, we landed alongside a trawler that we found five miles from the scene of the bombing to give them its position. In getting off again in a heavy ground swell, we tore off the step of the boat, and realizing that on our next landing we would undoubtedly sink, made all haste for South Shields, which was some fifty miles up the coast. The wind was due east and to make a landing close to the beach at South Shields it was necessary to fly in over the city and cut the motor while we were still among a lot of chimneys and smokestacks. We landed about fifty yards off the beach, and by the time we had swung the plane around and taxied up on the beach, the water was up to our waists.

On the 20th of July, we were out on special sub patrol and were within three miles of the reported position of a submarine that had been sighted, when our port motor failed and let us down in a heavy sea. On attempting a getaway, we broke two struts and strained the hull. A trawler in the vicinity that was putting out listening devices for the submarine picked us up and towed us in to Scarboro.

A wireless message from the station advised me to take tow from a trawler and join the southbound convoy. This convoy consisted of eighty-two ships, merchantmen, oil tankers, and tramps, with eight destroyers and two motor launches as escort. No planes flew over the convoy; the weather was too stormy and rough to permit it. The skipper of the trawler had taken a position about midway down the starboard side of the convoy. When we were off Flamboro Head, a little more than three hours out of Scarboro, the weather became so rough that it looked as though our seaplane would not ride out the gale. I asked the skipper of the trawler to put in to Bridlington, a protected harbor, until the storm should blow itself out. He had just changed his course and was perhaps 300 yards away from the main body of the convoy on the inshore side, when in great excitement he pointed out two torpedo wakes to me less than fifty yards aft of the seaplane.

One of the torpedoes hit the largest merchantman of the convoy just below the bridge, blowing off her nose and causing her to sink in six minutes. The other torpedo hit an oil tanker aft, but with the assistance of two trawlers she was able to get into Bridlington. It was a pathetic sight to see the big merchantman flounder about and slowly go down nose first. In the last minute a

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

terrific explosion took place when her boilers blew up, and some of the men who had attempted to get away in life boats were drawn in by the suction of the sinking ship. Only eleven out of a crew of thirty-seven were saved, and we learned from them later, when they were brought in to Bridlington, that most of the casualties had occurred on the initial explosion, when officers and men were killed in the boiler room and below decks.

Immediately after the explosion of the torpedoes, the destroyers and motor launches raced over to our vicinity and dropped depth charges freely in the hope of sinking the sub, which no one had seen. At times, five and six depth charges were going off simultaneously within a radius of 150 to 200 feet of us, and the concussion nearly lifted our little trawler out of the water. The submarine was not located, and in talking over the incident with some of the destroyer captains later on we could not figure out whether the sinkings were the result of marksmanship, or luck in having both torpedoes find a mark.

Most of our own equipment, in the way of planes, arrived on the *Jason* early in June, and consisted of 46 H-16s, with spare motors and accessories. The little naval supply ship had a harrowing trip across the Atlantic and down the North Sea, which lasted twenty-three days. Intelligence had evidently reached the Germans as to her movements, as they had submarines scattered along the coast waiting for her, but she came down the middle of the North Sea with an escort of three destroyers and arrived safely at the Humber River.

The first H-16 was ready for test on July 3d, and it was my good luck to fly her. I believe this was the first American-built plane to be flown abroad.

During my stay at Killingholme, which terminated about the middle of September, my work consisted principally of long reconnaissance flights, testing, and some instruction. I had several bad crashes, including one that was unique. I had been ordered to proceed at once to the vicinity of Flamboro Head where two submarines had been sighted. The wind was blowing at least forty knots; some idea of the conditions may be obtained from the fact that it took three attempts before I was successful in getting my plane off the river. The wind was inshore, and by the time I got into the air I was quite close to the station. To make sure of clearing the station's wireless apparatus, I banked up sharply to the right; then as I saw I was going to clear this

## THE KILLINGHOLME PATROLS

and my altitude was hardly more than 100 feet I started to take off some of the ailerons, but found that the wheel would not move. Looking down at a point where the aileron control wires came through a pulley to the control post, I found that one of the control wires was jammed between the pulley and the pulley support. To prevent a side-slip, I put on enough rudder to equalize the ailerons and stayed in the sharp bank until we were again out over the water and had completed a full turn. Then to get the plane down on an even keel, I cut the high motor and speeded up the low motor to the maximum. The torque from the low motor evened up the wings almost to level as I pointed her nose for the water.

Of course, there was a side drift of forty knots and with one motor wide open I was making about eighty-five knots forward speed. This was a bad combination for landing in a heavy sea. On striking the water, the bottom of the boat was swept completely off, the hull broke in the middle, and we sank quickly. The engineer dove out from the tail, the second pilot and I were able to get out quickly, but found it necessary to go back in and assist the wireless operator to free himself. None of us was scratched, and we were soon perched out on the top wing, the only part of the plane to remain above the surface of the water, waiting for a destroyer to pick us up.

On another occasion, motor trouble forced us to land while out in a heavy sea, which made a getaway impossible, after we had fixed our motor. We had the good luck to be picked up, some seventy miles from shore, by a British mine-laying destroyer on her way back from the mouth of the Kiel, where she had worked the night before under cover of darkness.

After a short assignment to duty at headquarters in London, which was really a rest period, I was sent down to the assembling and repair base at Eastleigh. This was one of the best organized, most efficient aviation units that I had seen. Just before the Armistice, they were turning out six or seven D.H.-4s a day. As fast as planes were set up and tested, they were sent out to squadrons in the fields in France.

On October 13th, I flew across the Channel with Ken MacLeish in a D.H., which we delivered at Lafraine for the Marine Day Bombing Squadron. We motored up to Dunkirk that night, and Ken, who was to join the '213 Squadron,' the British Camel Squadron, to which Dave Ingalls had been attached, called up

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Major Graham after dinner and asked him if he might not go over that night to the drome, which was only four miles from Dunkirk, to be on hand for a big offensive that was planned for October 14th. Major Graham was delighted at Ken's keenness, and was glad to take advantage of this offer of his services. Ken went out on the dawn patrol next morning, and was successful in getting a Boche. On his second trip out, however, he and a chap named Greene, a Britisher, were cut off from the rest of the squadron by eight or nine Hun planes and the two of them were last seen going down in a spin, one of them in flames. They dropped some four or five miles behind the German lines, near Leffinge. I obtained all the information available from Major Graham, and as our lines were moving forward rapidly, was able in a day or two to get up and scour the country for some trace of Ken. Although I devoted three full days to the search, I was unable to get any real trace of him.

While I was still at Dunkirk, the Huns were forced to evacuate Ostend, and with an ensign named Moore, Executive at the time of the Dunkirk station, I went up to Ostend. Two pilots from Dunkirk had flown up in the morning, and landed in the Basin de Chasse. One of them had broken a pontoon in getting off, and had sent word back that he would have to come back by motor as his plane was too badly damaged to repair and fly back. The Huns had evacuated early in the morning, and Moore and I arrived at 8.30 that night. The market place was thronged with old men, women and children, the only inhabitants of the city who had remained when the Germans took possession four years earlier. A party of British officers had preceded us, the first of the Allies to enter this Belgian city. We were met by the Mayor of the town and other dignitaries, and were given quarters for the night in a hotel that had been occupied the night previous by German officers. We were roused the next morning by the first contingent of Belgian forces to return to Ostend. They were marching in to the tune of 'La Brabançonne,' and it was a most inspiring sight to see the reception these weary troops, who had been marching all night, were given by the surviving inhabitants of Ostend.

Later on, we went down to the quay and watched three British trawlers followed by six French and British destroyers blow up forty-five floating mines, which the Huns had left in the harbor. The concussion was so great when these mines were exploded by



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machine gun fire that windows in the town were broken and crumbling walls fell.

I returned to England just before the Armistice, and together with Harry, Reg Coombe, Graham Brush, and 'Shorty' Smith, came back on the *Balmoral Castle* on the 18th of November.

After a short period of leave and a short term of duty in Washington, I was sent to the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California, and in the time there, from the middle of December until the middle of February, was busy organizing a permanent coast patrol of the west coast. I submitted plans for an organization of three squadrons, and found the work most interesting.

I was given my discharge to inactive duty on February 12, 1919.

Lieutenant Frank Lynch was recommended by Admiral Sims for the Distinguished Service Medal, and was awarded the Navy Cross by Secretary Daniels, with the following citation:

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON

11 November, 1920

SIR:

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the NAVY CROSS to

LIEUTENANT (J.G.) FRANCIS R. V. LYNCH, U.S.N.R.F.  
for services during the World War set forth in the following:

### CITATION

For distinguished and heroic service as a pilot of a seaplane engaged in patrolling the waters of the War Zone, escorting and protecting troop and cargo ships, operating against enemy submarines, and bombing the enemy coast, showing at all times courage and a high spirit of duty.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

LIEUTENANT (J.G.) FRANCIS R. V. LYNCH

Period 4 October, 1918, to 14 November, 1918:

A capable, intelligent and excellent young officer.

Consider him qualified to hold rank of lieutenant, and take pleasure in recommending him.

B. T. BULMER, *Cdr., U.S.N.*  
*N. A. Repair Base, Eastleigh, England*

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Lieutenant G. F. Lawrence finds mention in an illustrated booklet, or souvenir history, of the United States Naval Air Station, Killingholme, which was printed in England.

On the night of August 5, 1918, about 7.30 P.M. warning was received of the approach of hostile airships, and flying-boats were immediately prepared to engage the enemy. At 10.30 P.M. Zeppelins were reported rapidly approaching the coast. In spite of adverse weather conditions, rain and heavy mist, one flying-boat in charge of Ensign A. W. Hawkins and Lieutenant G. F. Lawrence took the air with instructions to patrol the coast line at an altitude of 10,000 feet until forced to return. Shortly after the departure of this machine, conditions were such that it was deemed inadvisable to risk sending additional machines. The machine that went out, in accordance with instructions, ascended to a height of 10,000 feet, where weather conditions were favorable, but owing to dense, low-flying clouds, it was impossible to see the earth at any time during the flight. In spite of this fact and the extreme difficulty of judging wind direction and velocity, at 5.30 A.M., when the supply of fuel was practically exhausted, a landing was made at South Shields, a point on the coast about 100 miles from the station.

Period 16 June to 30 June, 1918:

This officer is one of the type upon which reliance can be placed and has the appearance and manner which commands the respect of his subordinates. He has acted as instructor of students in piloting large flying boats and has performed duty as Pilot of large seaplanes operating against enemy submarines in the North Sea and off the Northeast coast of England.

THOMAS H. MURPHY, *Ensign, U.S.N.*  
*Squadron Commander, Killingholme, England*

Period 19 March to 8 May, 1918:

This officer has been on duty at this station under instruction in big boats and satisfactorily qualified as first pilot of the H-12 and H-16 type seaplanes. It is recommended that he be advanced in rank to Lieutenant (j.g.).

P. N. L. BELLINGER, *Lt. Cdr.*  
*Commanding Officer N.A.S., Hampton Rds. Va.*

Period 10 October, 1917, to 2 February, 1918:

Lynch is an excellent officer; he handles men well; he is quiet but forceful; he is a good aviator and has the qualities to make him an air fighter, for which training I strongly recommend him. I consider him well qualified for promotion to Lieutenant (j.g.) and recommend this advancement.

WARREN G. CHILD, *Lt. Cdr. U.S.N.*  
*N.A.S., Rockaway Beach, L.I.*

## THE KILLINGHOLME PATROLS

'Lotta' says of his foreign tour of duty:

A long, dreary trip across England, and we arrived in Killingholme much impressed with camouflage, searchlights, and general warlike look of things. We found the station a really wonderful place, much bigger than we expected and well organized. Commander Bowhill, an English R.N.A.S. pilot was then in command. The station was located on the west bank of the Humber about two miles below Hull, an excellent location but with one drawback, an eight knot tide in the river, which caused us much damage, before we got through. There were about 900 English and 500 Americans on the station, officers and men. Frank and I started flying at once, going on our first patrol within a couple of days of our arrival. We used F-2a's and H-12s with Rolls-Royce motors, and later H-16s with Liberties. It was then that I realized fully what a great benefit our training at Palm Beach and Huntington in small F-boats had been.

With the exception of the pilots who had been flying with the British at Felixstowe not one of the American pilots that we found on the station could fly boats and many of them never learned at all, and until the pilots who had been training with us at Hampton Roads got over, about a month later, the five from Felixstowe and Frank and myself did all the boat flying and consequently got in on all the good trips. Commander Whiting took the station over from the British early in July, with Lieutenant Leighton as executive, and 'Tom' Murphy as squadron commander. Subs were thick in July and scarcely a day passed without reports of one or more. Our war charts were covered with their activities, and something was bombed at least two or three times a week. Occasionally subs were caught running on the surface, but more often wakes and oil were bombed. Commander Whiting and 'Tom' Murphy, both old submarine men, were wonders at plotting positions, and subs usually showed up where they were expected to.

My one meeting with a sub was on my third patrol late one evening in July, about fifteen miles off the mouth of the Humber. My observer, George Hodges, first spotted a suspicious wake and we flew over it. The general outline of the sub was very clear and the long streams of bubbles from behind convinced me one was there. We circled and dropped one bomb (a British 230-pound), then circled again and dropped the other. The propellers stopped revolving and some oil came up. We

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called up a destroyer by blinker, which was convoying a ship near by, and she dropped six or eight depth charges on the spot, a wonderful sight. A great lot of oil came to the surface and we went home a pretty cheerful crew.

Two days later, Hodges and I went to see the Admiral of the East Coast, who congratulated us and said that one of his divers had been down into the submarine and that preparations were being made to raise it. Matters rested there for some time until Hodges went again to see the Admiral and was told that owing to a storm the buoys had been lost and the sub could not be found. We heard nothing more until a report came in from the Admiralty in London saying that owing to the fact that the buoys were lost the submarine could not be located again and therefore proof of the sinking could not be established, a little disappointing, to say the least.

My next trip of interest was an all night affair with 'Tex' Hawkins. Zeps had been reported off the coast several times during the preceding week, coming nearer each time, apparently preparing for a raid. On the night of August 5th, Zeps were reported from several quarters headed for the English coast and the mouth of the Humber. We were called out about 8 P.M. and 10 P.M. 'Tex' and I were ordered away in an F-2a specially equipped for night flying. We had orders to patrol back and forth at 10,000 feet from Robin Hood Bay to the Wash, a stretch of about sixty miles, and to remain out until dawn. 'Tex' having had night flying experience at Felixstowe took command. It was blowing quite hard when we left and raining a little and looked like a nasty night. We hit the clouds at about a thousand feet and climbed through them until we reached 9000 feet, where we fortunately got clear except for an occasional small cloud. Then we proceeded to chase everything in sight, stars, which we took for exhaust flames or signals of Zeps, small clouds which we thought were Zeps themselves, and even the moon when she first started to come up. A passing airplane gave us a real thrill, as there was no mistaking her riding-lights. When we went close, she gave us the correct signal; we were disappointed again.

So it went all night. We tried to navigate in a general way, but had no idea where the wind was coming from at that altitude. It had been blowing onto the coast when we left, so we kept working to sea to avoid being blown over the land in case we had





ZEPPELIN SHOT DOWN BY ENGLISH PLANES IN THE NORTH SEA



## THE KILLINGHOLME PATROLS

to come down. It nearly proved our undoing. Morning came at last, and we found ourselves above an endless sea of clouds with not a thing in sight. As our gas was getting low, we were faced with the necessity of an immediate return. As we hadn't the slightest idea where we were, we applied the rule of all pilots flying off the East Coast, 'When in doubt, fly west.' So we dropped down through the clouds until our altimeter registered two hundred feet, when we finally saw the water. We found to our great relief that we had a fifty-mile wind behind us, which would be a great help with our depleted supply of gasoline. It was raining hard and a big sea was running, so you can bet we were in a hurry. After what seemed hours of flying (as a matter of fact, it was forty-five minutes), we suddenly came on a fleet of trawlers headed to sea. As we had only thirty minutes' gas left, you can imagine how we felt; so we took a course from them and headed for what we knew must be a harbor, what or where we didn't care, and, sure enough, twenty minutes later, suddenly out of the fog ahead loomed the breakwater of what afterwards proved to be Tynemouth.

When we landed, 'Tex' and I fell on each other's necks and then proceeded to take stock of the situation. Talk about luck! We landed with ten minutes' gas left! Tynemouth is the only harbor for fifty miles on each side where it is possible to land a seaplane with any kind of an easterly wind blowing. The rest of the coast is composed of cliffs which jut from 200 to 400 feet above the sea. If we had not come on the trawlers, we would have run a good chance of hitting the cliffs, as the visibility was then about 500 feet. And if we had not had the good luck in steering a straight course from the trawler fleet, we might have hit the cliffs which run up sheer on either side of Tynemouth. As it was, we went plump over the middle of the breakwater about 100 feet up and 'Tex' made a magnificent turn and a perfect landing on the very heavy swell then running into the harbor from the sea.

'Tex' and I turned in and slept for a while at the R.A.F. headquarters in Tynemouth and then about 4 P.M. started for Killingholme, 150 miles down the coast. After various adventures in the heavy fog then lying in spots along the coast, such as nearly hitting the cliffs twice, flying down the main streets of towns on the shore, and chasing various flocks of animals in near-by fields, we arrived at Killingholme about 6 P.M., very

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

glad to be here. Two hours later, I had turned in for the night when the fire call sounded and general assembly, and at the same time there was a dull explosion. I rushed to my window and it seemed to me as if all our hangars were in flames.

On arrival at the beach, I found two machines blazing fiercely in the center hangar, and among them the one 'Tex' and I had just made our flight in. It seems that the mechanics had just filled her with gasoline, and the armorers had gone into her to look over the armament, one of them taking with him a lighted lantern, strictly against orders. There was a lot of vaporized gas lying in the bottom of the hull and the first thing he knew she was in flames. By attaching ropes to outlying portions of the machines nearest the door, we pulled them out onto the concrete and managed to save the other three in the hangar, and probably the whole place, as there were 250 gallons of gas in each machine.

One of the bravest things I have ever seen occurred that night. One of the two machines completely destroyed, an H-16, was all set for early morning patrol, which meant that she had four hundred rounds of machine-gun ammunition in her and two 230-pound bombs hanging under her wings. As it was farther in and behind our machine, which was burning in the doorway, it was not noticed at first. Then one of the armament men saw it. Without hesitating, he dashed in through the fire, pulled the release wire of one bomb which dropped on his shoulder, carried it out and then went back after the other, although severely burned the first time.

The Zeppelins were patrolling the Dogger Bank and Commander Whiting decided to have a try at them. One fine day in August he ordered three machines out for Zep reconnaissance. Only one got away, however, and I had the good fortune to be in it. I had with me Captain Pattison, an old R.N.A.S. man and an experienced pilot. We went straight out for three hours toward Heligoland and then climbed through the clouds to 12,000 feet, where we came out. We had been flying there five minutes when we spotted a black speck against the white clouds ten or fifteen miles to the north. The glasses showed it plainly to be a Zep, so we slid toward it through the top side of the clouds till we thought we must be close and then came out. We saw her about a mile away and slightly above us, heading for home, and looking as big as a house. We dove for the clouds again, but she must have seen us, for she tilted her nose up and shot up to 20,000

## THE KILLINGHOLME PATROLS

feet or more, far beyond our ceiling, and ran for home. We climbed and chased for a while, but soon saw it was hopeless. Also we had reached the limit of our gas and were well within the limits of the Borkum patrol, a particularly efficient German North Sea seaplane outfit. So we dropped down a few feet above the water and started back. We were then within fifty miles of Heligoland and not far from the Dutch Islands.

On our way back we ran through a fleet of Dutch luggers, fishing on the Dogger Bank. There must have been several Germans amongst them, for a lively fire was opened from several vessels, with light pom-poms, machine guns, and rifles, as we flew by. Our engineer and radio-man amused themselves by replying with the after machine guns, but no damage was done on either side. A little later while flying through a light mist we came suddenly on the British light cruiser squadron. Before we had a chance to fire the recognition signal of the day, the hottest kind of a shrapnel fire was opened on us, and a Camel scout machine flew off the front deck of one of the cruisers. For a minute things looked bad, but we got off our signals and I lifted the machine up into the air to show our wing marks (we were then flying about ten feet above the water as we had a stiff head wind) and the shooting ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

After three more hours of flying we sighted the coast about thirty miles north of the Humber. We were flying peaceably along in the gathering darkness when suddenly right ahead loomed an enormous Zep. I nearly jumped out of my seat, but Pattison only laughed and shouted '*British*' in my ear. We flew close under her and got a good look. She was either the R-34 or her sister ship the R-33. They were stationed quite near us, as I saw them several times after that, but this was the first time I ever knew the British had them. We landed about 9.30 by means of flares on the water, having been out nine hours and fifty minutes.

Very little happened during the month of September. There was a great deal of routine patrol and bad weather and few subs. We spent a great deal of time trying to get the Liberty motored H-16s into condition for sea service, as up till that time we had used English F-2a's with Rolls-Royce motors for all long flights. In October the weather settled somewhat and talk of the German fleet coming out put every one on their toes. Long reconnaissance flights were made, some of them lasting seven or eight



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

hours. A few pilots were sent to Dundee to coöperate with the Grand Fleet then in the Firth of Forth. However, that excitement soon died away, and the prospect of spending a miserable winter in that dismal spot was dampening every one's spirits, when the great news of the Armistice came. Within two weeks all but a few were on their way home.

The peak of operating efficiency at Killingholme was reached in October when we averaged fifteen machines ready for patrol per day for a while and one day had more than twenty. Of course, patrols were run almost every day, and many machines were lost through crashes, some through fire, and many laid up due to 'pick-up' boats smashing into them due to the eight-knot tide in the river. The British had left us about eight F-2a's when they gave over the station, some of them of the most recent type and all equipped for war service. These proved the backbone of the squadron at Killingholme. In all the early flying during July and August when subs were thickest and scarcely a day passed without an emergency call, the F-2a's with their ever-reliable Rolls motors did all the work, and later, when the American built H-16s were put in commission the F-2a's were called on for all long reconnaissance flights, in fact for any work which would take a machine more than fifty miles to sea. But these wore out or were crashed until we were reduced in October to three, which were carefully reserved for any special emergency. The H-16s kept giving trouble and any possibility of attack against Kiel seemed to get more and more remote. The failure to get off and crashing of boats when attempting to take off from lighters in any kind of sea which had occurred in several instances during the summer, rather discouraged people about the success of any such expedition as had formerly been planned. However, the work of fitting the machines to lighters went ahead, and I believe at least one would have been tried had not the Armistice put an end to our troubles. But in general, we were expecting to wait for the spring and in the meantime get a new type of machine and a later model Liberty motor.

Under the American régime, a remarkable amount of flying was done out of Killingholme. In September and October an average of well over a hundred hours a week was maintained and some weeks it exceeded 200. Killingholme had the highest record in number of hours of patrol and ships convoyed of any patrol station in England, during the months of August, Sep-

## THE KILLINGHOLME PATROLS

tember and October. This might have been bettered but for the awful weather during September, when hardly a day went by without rain or fog and the wind never seemed to stop blowing a gale. But in spite of it there were very few days when flying was 'washed out.' The fog and rain cost us many smashed machines (three in one morning) but it was the best weather for sub hunting and nearly all bombings took place in foggy or rainy weather. We did a lot of mine-layer convoying towards the end, a very dull but important job. The British mine-laying base at Immingham was only a mile below the station and there was a whole fleet of mine-laying destroyers and steamers which had to be protected while laying their mines. Of course, convoys of coastwise steamers went up and down the war channel every day and had to have aerial escorts, weather permitting. There you could see all types of coastal aircraft, from enormous British Zeps hanging like great sausages over the convoy to tiny Sopwith pups which used to fly circles around our great lumbering boats. Convoying was tiresome work, but most important, and eventually drove the subs off the East coast.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

LIEUTENANT (J.G.) G. F. LAWRENCE, JR.

Period from 23 March to 8 May, 1918:

This officer was employed on duty under instruction in big Flying Boats and was satisfactorily qualified as first pilot of the H-12 and H-16 types. It is recommended that this officer be advanced in rank to Lieutenant (j.g.).

P. N. L. BELLINGER, *Lieut. Comdr., U.S.N.*  
*Commanding Naval Air Station, Hampton Roads, Va.*

Period from 17 June to 30 July, 1918:

Excellent seaplane pilot. Has flown seaplanes about 200 hours. Has flown seaplanes operating against enemy submarines. Has acted as instructor in large flying boats.

THOMAS H. MURPHY, *Ensign U.S.N.*  
*Squadron Commander, U.S.N.A.S. Killingholme*

Period from 17 June to 30 September, 1918:

Flight commander of flight of three A-16 flying boats. An excellent pilot. This officer has been engaged in convoy escort and submarine search patrols of the North Sea.

B. G. LEIGHTON, *Lieutenant, U.S.N.*  
*Squadron Commander, Killingholme*

Period from 2 October to 29 December, 1918:

Flight Commander of Flight B. H-16 flying boats. An excellent pilot.

K. WHITING  
*Commanding, Killingholme*

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When the American force was ready to haul down its colors and depart for home, the British Vice-Admiral of the East Coast, Sir Edward F. B. Charlton, sent this message to Commander Whiting:

Please express to the officers and men of the United States Naval Air Station, Killingholme, under your orders, who are now on the point of leaving for their own country, my most hearty thanks for their steadfast coöperation in the active work of the 18th Group, R.A.F. Since I have been in command of the East Coast of England, their willing assistance at all times has been of the greatest value; and they have undoubtedly protected the convoy on many occasions from attack. I shall miss your force greatly at Killingholme, and wish you all success in the future.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### 'DI' GATES IS SHOT DOWN

IN a recent number of *The Bookman*, Lawrence Perry discussed the tainted odor of modern fiction, with special reference to novels of the college campus written by precocious artists with tired eyes who drain the cup of existence to the dregs when they are not much more than old enough to vote. The gist of the argument was that the athlete as a hero is regarded as obsolete and childish. His simple standards of courage and clean-mindedness and duty belong in the Victorian rubbish-heap. And yet Lawrence Perry is bold enough to question the prevailing slant and goes on to say:

Di Gates of Yale, the dashing tackle of 1916, the gallant gentleman, the true sportsman, and in 1917-18 the naval aviator with the cold waters of the North Sea tumbling beneath him — if he had shortcomings, those who were in college with him and those who knew him in the service have no recollections of any. Withal, he possessed one very material shortcoming; he lacked every qualification that would have inspired the average author of the average type of novel we are reading these days to accept him, or his sort, as the leading character. Yet again, why should this be so?

Are Gates and Johnny Overton and Hobey Baker and Tim Callahan and all the rest of those who in their strong and beautiful prime walked in lofty places artistically outlawed as fictional types?

It is greatly to be doubted. In truth, so far as artistic achievement is concerned, let it stand as an axiom — or at least as a sound and legitimate subject for argument — that there is far greater difficulty in devising a clean and uplifting theme and thereupon carrying it forward through some three hundred or

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

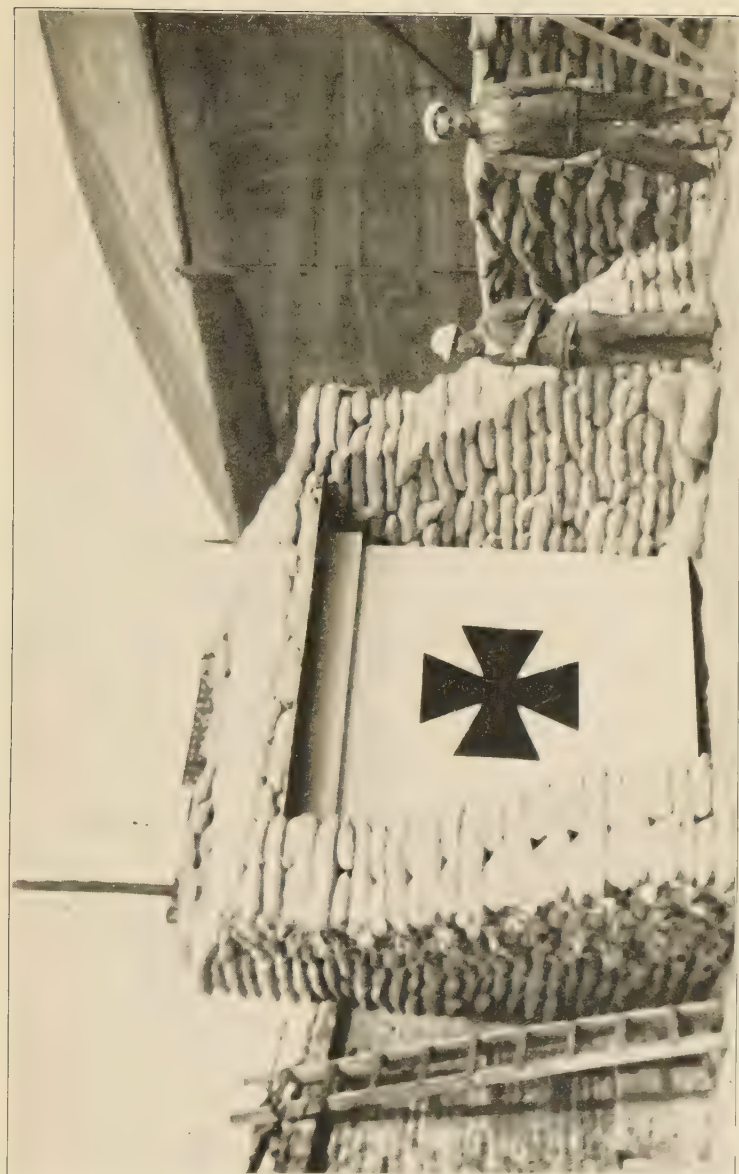
more pages in a decent, wholesome, and of course, salable manner, than there is in formulating situations that bear upon the triumph of illicit love and other tangents of unrestrained youth and unregenerate middle age.

... Not without a feeling of venturesomeness the opinion herewith is hazarded that in ghostly array in a not distant, even if nebulous foreground, prototypes of Di Gates and Hobey Baker and Johnny Poe and Hack McGraw are awaiting the summons to the printed page; and that when they are drafted they will be greeted by combined frog choruses and locomotives and long-drawn Puritan rahs, not to mention a susurrus of feminine sighs, that will relegate prevalent modes of the pen to the lumber room of things that are no longer done. Not only that, we may with some confidence look for antiphonal applause from the earnest Elizabethan Club and its sisters in places far flung from New Haven.

My friend Sam Blythe, of the *Saturday Evening Post*, is a person with a very wide and varied experience of men and things. Concerning the motives of politicians and others who parade to the sound of tom-toms, he is apt to be cynical and disillusioned. In short, he seldom slops over. In the course of a tour to several foreign naval bases during the war, he made a genial appearance at Dunkirk which impressed him as being anything else than a health resort or a place in which tired business men might rest their nerves. He was kept so busy side-stepping shells and bombs that his impressions were hectic, like my own, but etched clear on his mind was the American station and its commanding officer, Lieutenant Artemus L. Gates. And as soon as he found a quieter nook, he sat down and wrote:

If you know about college football, you know about Gates, sometime captain of the Yale team. As my knowledge of college football is entirely incidental, I didn't know about Gates, and the first time I heard of him was when Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, the great British sailor who was the inspiring genius of the blockading operations at Zeebrugge and Ostend, the man who sent the *Vindictive* in, told me about him at Dover, speaking





MACHINE-GUN TARGET AT DUNKIRK STATION



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as one brave man speaks of another, albeit Gates was only a lieutenant in our naval air forces and Keyes a vice-admiral with four rows of ribbons on his tunic signifying that he has received at the hands of his Government and the Admiralty about all there is in the way of honors and rewards.

'A very gallant officer,' said the Admiral, and he related the incident he had in mind, which was this:

One afternoon, when Gates was at our naval air station at Dunkirk, a signal came in that a British plane had been shot down by the Germans up the coast and had fallen in the sea within range of the German shore guns. All the naval radios at Dunkirk picked up the signal and there was an immediate scurry to get to the rescue of the wrecked aviators. Gates jumped to a seaplane that was moored in the water, without waiting for assistance or company and aid in the way of observers and machine-gun men, set the propeller whirling, and was off alone at ninety miles an hour. He reached the spot where the aviators were in the water clinging to the remains of their machines, potted at by the Germans on shore, and swooped down beside them, landing with perfect skill and control, regardless of the wicked fire that came from the Huns. He pulled the wrecked aviators onto his plane, made his run along the water, rose, turned, and whooped back to Dunkirk, meeting the other rescuers who were coming out in other planes and in coastal motor-boats, saving the lives of two Englishmen who gleefully waved their hands at the oncomers and motioned them to go back, not only because Gates had saved them, but because the Huns were very angry over the whole business and were plastering the seascape thereabouts with machine-gun bullets and shrapnel.

'A very gallant officer,' said Admiral Keyes. 'I have recommended him for a decoration.'

I came across the Channel next day in an English destroyer, landing at Dunkirk, and Gates was a fellow guest with me at luncheon with Commodore Larkin, British Commandant at the Port. Gates was big, broad-shouldered, smiling, modest, deprecating any mention of this exploit or of any of his other exploits, and though he commanded the American station with the Dunkirk section of our naval aviators under him, almost shy. I told him what the Admiral had said to me. He blushed and fidgeted.

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'It was nothing,' he said. 'Any one of the fellows would have done it.'

This was the first time I saw Gates. The last time I saw him was after ten o'clock a few nights later, standing on the steps of the house where the senior officers messed, silhouetted against the light from the open door, big, laughing, full of the joy of life, an officer every inch of his six feet of brawn, telling the British commander and me how to get through the Stygian streets of Dunkirk, past the inner and outer gates, and where to pick up the road that would take us to the place where we were going.

... Five or six weeks later, I returned to Dunkirk. I asked for Gates.

'He's gone,' they said at the station.

'Gone where?'

'We don't know. We wish we did.'

Then I heard the story. When the big Allied offensive began, a few days before, in that section, early in October, Gates asked permission to fly in a land machine with the French who were going over to do battle with the Huns. He wanted to get into it. He was a great pilot, and the French were glad to have him. So one morning he took his seat in a fighting machine and started off with a French formation. Presently they met some Germans who outnumbered them two to one. The French, skilled tacticians in the air, maneuvered to get beneath them. With the same spirit he had shown on the gridiron, Gates flew at them. They got him. When the French fliers came back, the ominous 'failed to return' was written after the name of Gates in the report.

As I write he is still carried as missing on the rolls. If he is alive, the Navy will welcome him back as one of their best. If he is dead, hail and farewell! Gates was a type of the fearless, light-hearted men who have been flying for us in France. As such I tell his story. Gallants all of them, many have failed to return, but not one of them who didn't go out as Gates went out, eager for the encounter, discounting the ultimate, seized of no other desire than to uphold the traditions of the service and to advance the cause of their country.

This is how it appealed to the veteran journalist. The rescue of those imperiled British aviators under fire from the coast was, to Gates, an episode of the day's work and

## DI GATES IS SHOT DOWN

to be regarded as such. It was a welcome break in the routine. His promptitude, skill, and disregard of his own safety were what might have been expected. This was what he had been trained for. He could honestly see no reason for making a fuss about it. The officials of the British, French, and American Governments chose to regard it as notable among the many deeds of valor performed by their soldiers and sailors.

The first report was prepared by Major W. L. Welsh, commanding the 61st Wing, R.A.F., and addressed to Captain Lambe. It read:

At 0730, A.S. Patrol 1600, Lieut. Gregory and Lieut. Johnson, U.S. Forces, landed at St. Pol and reported an Allied machine down in sea approximately 8' Mag. N. of Ostend at 0720. The machine was recognized to be a H.P. and two of the occupants were seen, one on either wing tip. I immediately rung up Commander Clarke of the Commodore's staff and informed him, and as I was doubtful as to whether any surface craft would be able to approach the wreck, I asked the C.O. American Seaplanes to send a machine out.

The Fighter Squadrons were warned to stand by to provide an escort. Two C.M.'s left at 0820, and 3 D.H.-4s were sent to lead them to the wreck. Thirteen Camels and 204 and 213 Squadrons were sent as escort to C.M.B.'s and American seaplanes. Lieut. Gates in the seaplane left at 0830, and proceeded straight to the wreck. The D.H.-4s were then in the vicinity. The seaplane landed at 0900 and took off the crew of the H.P. The C.M.B.'s arrived just as the seaplane was leaving.

The position of the wreck was fixed by the C.M.B.'s in 51.17 N., 2.44 E. The tail was out of the water and there was about 6" of water on the top plane. Lieut. Hetherington and A. G. Kennedy, U.S.N., were picked up. Lieut. Fletcher, Observer, was drowned, and is still in the machine. The pilot states that he was forced to land apparently owing to a petrol tank being hit, at 2355 last night, four miles to sea just W. of Nieuport. The machine was breaking up when the crew were taken off.

It is submitted that attention may be drawn to the conduct of Lieutenant Gates, U.S.N., for the prompt manner in which he



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got to the wreck. He left the Camels with the C.M.B.'s and proceeded directly to the Handley-Page unescorted and took off the two occupants in a very short time. This officer has on other occasions rendered valuable assistance to British machines in distress.

In forwarding this report to Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes at Dover, Captain Lambe took occasion to say:

I further desire to bring to your notice the very gallant conduct of Lieut. Artemus L. Gates, U.S.N., with a view to his name being submitted to their Lordships for the reward of such decoration as may be considered desirable.

Lieut. Gates, who is now in command of the U.S.N. seaplanes, at once went to the rescue himself, flying a three-seater seaplane. He carried no gun-layers in order that he might be able to bring away as many passengers as possible. He was aware of the close proximity of the wreck to the enemy's coast, and was totally unable to protect himself from attacks by enemy aircraft.

I consider that this officer carried out an act requiring skill and bravery of the highest degree in the face of the enemy.

It was the good pleasure of their Lordships of the Admiralty to award Lieutenant Gates the Distinguished Flying Cross. Admiral Sims sent the British reports to the Navy Department with this endorsement:

It is considered that Lieutenant Gates's action is worthy of the best traditions of our service and it is therefore recommended that he be given a Medal of Honor, and if consistent with the Department's present policy, that he be advanced to the rank of Lieutenant Commander.

Gates received the Distinguished Service Medal from his own Government and was promoted to the grade of Lieutenant Commander on April 1, 1919, to rank from October 1, 1918. Another honor of importance was the official letter of commendation from the Secretary of the Navy. This was sent to him after his return to the United States.

## DI GATES IS SHOT DOWN

To Lieutenant A. L. Gates, U.S.N.R.F.

Clinton, Iowa

Subject: Commendation

1. The Department is in receipt of a communication from the Commander U.S. Naval Forces Operating in European Waters enclosing correspondence concerning your gallant conduct in going to the assistance of the wrecked Handley-Page machine on August 22, 1918; copies of this correspondence are attached hereto for your information.

2. The Department has read with pleasure the account of your gallant action in going to the aid of Lieutenant Hetherington, R.A.F., and A. G. Kennedy, E-2c, U.S.N., as described in the above-mentioned correspondence, and notes especially that you proceeded to the rescue without gun-layers, although aware that you were totally unable to protect yourself from attack by enemy aircraft, and in order that your plane might have a greater passenger carrying capacity.

3. Your action on this occasion reflects credit on the Naval Service and merits the highest commendation of the Department, which is hereby extended to you.

4. A copy of this correspondence will be filed with your official efficiency record.

(Signed) JOSEPHUS DANIELS

Dave Ingalls has other recollections of 'Di' Gates at Dunkirk besides this conspicuous affair of the wrecked British Handley-Page. The fact is, one has to depend a good deal upon what others have to say to find out very much of how the young commanding officer carried on his job. He will go so far as to affirm that it was great sport while it lasted.

The first impression I got of 'Di' at Dunkirk [says Dave] was when I came back from Clermont-Ferrand. I walked into the station and saw one of the Filipino mess boys parading back and forth with two bricks under each arm. I asked 'Di' what was the big idea. He said, 'Oh, that's all right. He has to do that for two or three days. I am punishing him.' This showed me that discipline had not been allowed to relax, in spite of the troubles and distractions of being shot up between meals. I went out on a

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

patrol with 'Di' one day when none of the rest of our crowd had machines ready. So we trailed along with a French outfit. I was in a single-seater and he was flying a D-D. We were a few miles offshore from Ostend when I saw 'Di' go down and alight on the water. I thought I ought not to leave him alone, so I went down to take a look at him. He was waving his arms and I didn't know what was the matter with him. Pretty soon he began to shoot at me with a Véry pistol, so I pulled out my Véry pistol and started shooting at him. Having blown away all my cartridges, I decided to go home and tell the motor boats about him. They scooted out after him and staged a salvage party, but he wasn't worried enough to say so.

I was with the Camels sent out to pick up the Handley-Page that flopped down close to the Belgian coast when 'Di' earned all his medals and things. He was so spry when the alarm came in that he beat us to it. It wasn't a nice place to be in, under the German guns and with their planes flying about, but this calm-and-collected Gates never turned a hair, as I recall it. He shut off his motor and landed on one wing and picked up one man; then he started off and dropped down with the other wing and picked up the other man and flew off with them. It was dog-goned neat.

When the French station needed pilots for its Spads in the autumn, Gates volunteered to fly with these fighting squadrons, although as a commanding officer he was entitled to stay on *terra firma*. But, like Dave Ingalls, Freddie Beach, George Moseley, and other American pilots belonging to the Northern Bombing Group, he felt only too glad and eager to join the comrades of the French service in the final great offensive which smashed the German occupation of Belgium.

It was on the morning of October 4th that Lieutenant Gates went out on his second chasse patrol which consisted of five Spads. Two of these were flown by Freddie Beach and George Moseley. At an altitude of 12,000 feet above Courtrai, they were attacked by a formation of fifteen enemy machines, Fokker scouts, biplanes, and a



GERMAN SEAPLANES





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few triplanes, which came down out of the clouds. Perceiving that things were a bit too thick for them, the Spads dived to get away and so eluded pursuit. They lost sight of the enemy and then resumed the patrol.

A little later in the morning they again encountered the same Fokker force at about the same altitude, and again it fell upon them from the clouds. At the moment of this second attack, the five Spads were in a V formation, the French captain flying at point, Freddie Beach on the right side and 'Di' Gates third and just behind him. Again the agile Spads eluded the odds of three to one, diving in the direction of their own lines. Glancing backward, Beach saw several hostile craft above him and 'Di' Gates apparently in the act of making a right climbing turn. To the drumming racket of machine-gun fire, the Spads winged it for home, but there were only four of them.

Gates had dived and disappeared, from more than two miles up among the clouds. And this was all that could be reported. Dave Ingalls expressed the feelings of the Dunkirk Station and the brotherhood of the First Yale Unit when he wrote, on that same day:

*Oct. 4, 1918*

DEAR MOTHER:

To start off with, today has been an awful day. I've been detached from my squadron and suppose I'll have a sedentary position or do some rotten job for a change. Needless to state I am very sorry to leave.

And now the really bad news! Good old Di Gates had just started flying a scout with some French squadron, and today, about his third patrol, seven of them were attacked by ten or fifteen Huns and Di has been missing since. Honestly I've never felt so terribly in all my life. He was the greatest fellow in the world. The fight occurred about four miles over the lines. All the rest of the patrol dove and got away. But Freddie Beach says he saw Di turn as a Hun fired on him, Di, from behind, — straight into about **six or seven others**. That was the last seen of him.

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As Di was a very good pilot, tho' he had no experience fighting, he may have gotten away. I'm sure he's all right, perhaps crashed on our side of the lines and has been unable to telephone or else, at the worst, a prisoner of war. We shall not know for certain for a month, I suppose. He had just been given the Distinguished Flying Cross for flying in a boat to a crashed night bomber and landing and picking them up — off the Hun coast some distance from here. Everybody has been telephoning for word about him. No one is so popular with every race here, French, English and American. His father is dead, but he has two brothers and a sister, who, I hope, will somewhat console his mother, to whom he was absolutely devoted. Dear old Di, the best fellow God ever made. Well, we'll hope for the best.

The official tidings, cabled to the Bureau of Navigation and signed Sims, could state no more than this:

*Feb. 10, 1918*

Following from Calais Aviation. Lieutenant Artemus L. Gates, U.S.N.R.F. missing since Oct. 4. Was flying with French Spad squadron and last seen being attacked by enemy planes over enemy lines. General officer commanding 5th group reported this morning that no trace could be found of him at sunrise. An investigation has been made through English and Belgian authorities whose troops occupy that sector. Mrs. Emma L. Gates, Clinton, Iowa, mother, is next of kin.

Twelve days later, the word went to Mrs. Gates that her son's machine had been found, burnt but not crashed, and that the evidence indicated that he was a prisoner and probably unwounded. Apparently he had set the plane on fire himself to prevent its falling into the hands of the enemy. Immediately following this came the detailed investigation made by Lieutenants Harry P. Davison and Kenneth Smith, who were sent to the scene of the accident by Lieutenant Commander Robert A. Lovett, commanding officer of Field 'A,' Northern Bombing Group, at St. Inglevert. This, you will note, was a strictly Unit affair, with Trubee Davison kept posted in New York by cable-

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grams from Allan Ames. The written report made to Captain Hanrahan by Harry and 'Ken' was dated October 25th:

In accordance with verbal instructions of the Commanding Officer, we proceeded to the place where Lieutenant Gates's machine was brought down. Upon arrival we made a careful inspection of the burned plane. As all evidence (i.e., no broken wing-tips, landing-gear intact, tail construction unharmed by fall, radiator shutters not bent) showed that Lieutenant Gates had landed his machine under control, we decided that he had been taken prisoner.

We examined the ground and found that in landing his right wheel had touched, causing his machine to leave the ground and come down on its two wheels further on, where it left again and went upon its nose. We found that his machine was very badly shot up, but by careful examination of the angles of the bullet holes in the plane, we saw that none of them had pierced in the vicinity of the pilot's seat. His right magneto distributor block was shot away, his gasoline tank was pierced but showed no signs of being charred by flames. The water jacket on the inside after side of the right block of cylinders was shot away.

We next made inquiries if there had been any civilians there during the German occupation. We found a woman who spoke French. She in turn found a boy who had seen the plane go down and land. We asked him to tell us all he knew about the occurrence. He said that the machine had landed and tipped up on its nose. He saw the pilot get out of the machine and set it on fire and then stand up with his hands over his head. The boy then said that some German soldiers went up to the pilot and, after a short conversation, two of them took him away with them. We asked him if the pilot was injured. He told us that he was uninjured and that he walked without either a stoop or a limp and that his arms were all right. We asked him to describe the pilot. He told us that he was a big, tall man. We asked him what time the aeroplane landed. He said that it was around 10.30 in the morning.

The boy's description of the landing of the plane; the setting fire to it; the description of Lieutenant Gates and the time of the falling, all backed by the known facts and the information as to his being taken prisoner, all fitted perfectly together. There can

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

be no doubt that Lieutenant Gates was uninjured and that he is a prisoner.

This gratifying report was supplemented by Mr. Henry P. Davison who cabled to Trubee on October 28th:

Arrived London after two full days Belgium, Harry going with me and was present when King decorated me. Afterwards we motored to field finding Gates's machine from which am bringing souvenirs home. Talked with family who saw him come down. Machine made but slight furrow in soft ground then turned on back. Family saw Gates crawl from under and hold up his hands to three German aviators who followed him down, alighting near him. Gasoline tank having been shot, gasoline had spilled out over machine when it turned turtle. Gates standing near machine in presence captors took cigarette to light it quickly, dropping lighted match on machine which then flamed up. He was seen to walk away undoubtedly uninjured. Thus far unable to secure information relative his present whereabouts, doubtless due to great confusion within Germany. Advise his mother.

Lieutenant Artemus Gates was, indeed, very much alive and going strong as his own narrative demonstrated after he was restored to his friends. Leaving him in a German prison camp until after the Armistice, it is necessary to follow to a conclusion the fortunes of the Northern Bombing Group (and particularly Bob Lovett), from which Gates had been so violently detached. It was Lovett's reward for work well done that he was advanced to the grade of Lieutenant Commander on April 1, 1919, to rank from October 1st, 1918.

Captain Hanrahan's letter urging this promotion was as follows:

Lieutenant Lovett is one of the most capable and thorough officers I have ever known. He is, in a large degree, responsible for the organization and fitting out of this group. He has a very fine organizing ability and an exceptional command of men, being fitted temperamentally as a natural leader.

At present he is in command of Night Squadron No. 1 and



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under the most trying circumstances, with little help in the way of material, he has built up a very efficient squadron. Acting as Night Wing Commander he is now organizing the Night Wing where, being an experienced night bomber, his thorough knowledge of all matters pertaining to aviation, especially bombing, fit him exceptionally well for the position.

I earnestly recommend him for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Commander, and consider his past and present work in the Group well deserving of such promotion.

When it was comprehended that the original plans of the Northern Bombing Group had been fatally impaired for lack of machines, Lovett was ready with another and a bolder conception which proposed to transfer naval aviation entirely away from the coast and wage an offensive inland. He was ready to go on with the war for another year or two. At the request of Captain Cone, he prepared a report on future operations that is one of the ablest and most interesting documents connected with the services of the First Yale Unit.<sup>1</sup> It stated, in part:

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

### LIEUTENANT ROBERT A. LOVETT

Period from October 1 to November 15, 1917:

Lieut. Lovett came under my observation when I was in command of the U.S.N.A.S., Moutchic, France. He was Chief Pilot, construction officer for seaplanes and organized the school and method of keeping the school supplied with machines. It was during his term of office as Chief Pilot that 90 flights were made in one day with five machines. His handling of men was exceptionally good considering the small amount of experience in that line that he had had. I cannot speak too highly of his enthusiasm and energy with which he takes over his work.

G. C. DICHMAN, *Lieut. Comdr. U.S.N.*

Period from December 17 to January 26, 1918:

During the period covered by this report this officer was stationed at Felixstowe and upon several trips that I made to England I have been associated with British officers under whom he served. These officers without exception have praised this young officer highly, not only for his officer-like qualities but for his splendid example, and altogether I feel that his record while at his station reflects great credit on the U.S. Naval Service.

H. I. CONE, *Captain, U.S.N.*

Period from July 1 to September 30, 1918:

A most capable and efficient officer. Devotion to duty exceptional. He has



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It seems unlikely, from existing sources of supplies, that enough planes will be obtained by the spring of 1919 to equip and maintain three squadrons of night bombers. The proposition depended upon continuous bombing of objectives, with a large number of planes, which would make complete destruction possible. By cutting down the number of squadrons and finally being unable to obtain machines in the desired quantities, the project, of necessity, loses the keystone of his foundations.

An advance of the Army in the area of Northern Belgium brings the most important manufacturing centres of Germany within reach of our night bombers. The distance from an enemy aerodrome, now in our hands, to Dusseldorf and Essen is approximately 147 miles, the entire journey being parallel, roughly with the Dutch frontier. This distance is but little greater than that now covered by the over-sea route from Field 'A' to Melle Sidings and the aerodromes southeast of Ghent. These long trips into the enemy country can only be undertaken by night bombers.

The work of carrying the war into the manufacturing centres of Essen and Dusseldorf must be done by someone. The night squadrons of the Northern Bombing Group are now in the field, trained and waiting for machines. What difference does it make whether we are under Army or Navy supervision in so far as objectives are concerned? The work must be done and done at once; for the sooner Germany is hit in the arteries of her military power, and on her own soil, the sooner will peace be made, unconditionally. Regardless, therefore, of the fact that we might operate under the Field Marshal or some military organization; regardless of the fact that the objectives are not seaports and are not totally surrounded by water, the force in the field should be utilized and the war got on with.

In this connection it is interesting to note that many people thought that the R.N.A.S. should only have flown seaplanes or boats, until they saw what was accomplished by the Navy on land. It was the R.N.A.S. that brought out the Sopwiths, the Handley-Pages, backed the Rolls-Royce, and made a success of the night bombing. No one questioned whether the pilots had

exceptional organizing ability. Is a man of most excellent character, has proven himself a most efficient squadron commander. Recommended for promotion.

D. C. HANRAHAN, *Captain U.S.N.*

## DI GATES IS SHOT DOWN

anchors on their caps or not, as long as Huns were shot down and important objectives were bombed.

The U.S. Navy has a similar chance to take the lead in aviation; first, because of its organization; secondly, because of its moderate size; and thirdly, because the Navy, of itself, demands specialized ratings and trained men, especially machinists, carpenters, ship fitters and electricians, all of whom are fundamental in aviation.

It is thought that, in a situation such as exists at present, little is risked by placing the whole matter frankly before the highest commands. The facts that stand out in all conversations are: first, the most important objectives in Germany are within the reach of night bombers; second, the U.S. Naval Air Service is in a position to man and operate such night bombing squadrons; third, someone must bomb the main objectives. Whether one organization or another flies the machines makes little difference, as long as 550 and 1660 pound bombs alight on munition factories and do so at once. Finally it would be one of the greatest arguments in favor of amalgamating the two air services if it could be said that, at a crisis in the military situation and at a time when every blow counts towards shortening the war, a trained force in the field was left without machines, merely because the objectives did not border on the sea or have the main approaches guarded by a lighthouse.

The end of the war came so much sooner than expected that this proposal went into the discard, along with the rest of the program. A farewell to the Northern Bombing Group is contributed by Atlee Edwards who says:

It began active operations on its own initiative on October 14th, 1918, at which time a raid was made on enemy railway lines at Thielt, day and night raids, eight of them in all, being carried on until October 27th. The mission of the Northern Bombing Group, however, was accomplished by the evacuation of the enemy's naval bases on the coast of Belgium. The naval situation in that area, was therefore, of an entirely satisfactory nature, but as conditions on land were not so satisfactory it was decided that the Northern Bombing Group should continue to operate in conjunction with the Allied armies in Flanders until the crisis that existed should have been overcome.

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

It will be seen that although this air force was originally created to exterminate the submarines on the Belgian coast, it eventually wound up as a part of the British army in the great drive of 1918, but not until after it had been offered to General Pershing and declined on the grounds that it could be used to greater advantage where it was and in conjunction with the British. During this drive it advanced successively from the operational command of the British vice-admiral commanding the Dover Patrol to that of the French admiral commanding the Flanders area, until it was finally placed under the orders of the Belgian authorities into whose area of command it had advanced and with whom it operated until the Armistice was signed.

The Armistice! Dave Ingalls said it for all of them in writing his 'Dear Dad' from Eastleigh on November 11th:

Peace at last! It is certainly the greatest news ever, and every one is crazy with delight over here. Saturday I flew across to France and all over Belgium. It seemed quite strange to be flying over Hun land and not get shot at. I couldn't get used to it and imagined I heard machine-guns every now and then. We went to all the aerodromes I once bombed, and flew along the road where we had put the fear of God into the Hun transport. Gosh, it was great! We spent the night at Lovett's aero and saw Harry and the others. Harry and I talked over our after-the-war plans and it was pretty nice. We both want to go to Yale again and room together, next fall.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### A PRISONER IN GERMANY

To Lieutenant Gates the Armistice meant release from a prison camp in the enemy's country. With gusto could he echo the words of Dave Ingalls, 'Gosh, it was great!' His friends knew that he was alive, but his experiences were a blank page. Shot down and captured, he had vanished beyond their ken. A man of great hardihood and endurance they felt confident that, sooner or later, he would be restored to them undamaged. The Harvard football team had discovered that he was not easy to down. It was on November 26th that he was sent to Constance with the other American prisoners held at Karlsruhe. From there the Swiss officials expeditiously returned them to France and the American Army. For Gates it meant glimpses of Paris and Dunkirk and home via England.

Now it was possible to learn what his adventures had been. They had begun with that patrol on the morning of October 4th, when Gates had flown in the French formation of five Spads, high over Belgium and behind the enemy's lines. At an altitude of 12,000 feet, the clouds were just above them as a fleecy ceiling. Out of them dived fifteen Fokkers, unseen and unsuspected. The five Spads tarried not, but dived in their turn. There were too few of them to make a dog-fight of it. Gates noticed that his opposite number in the V formation was missing. This left him alone. He swooped toward the earth in a long slant, hoping to elude the swarm of Fokkers and regain his own side of the lines, fifteen miles distant. Outnumbered three to one, it was every man for himself.

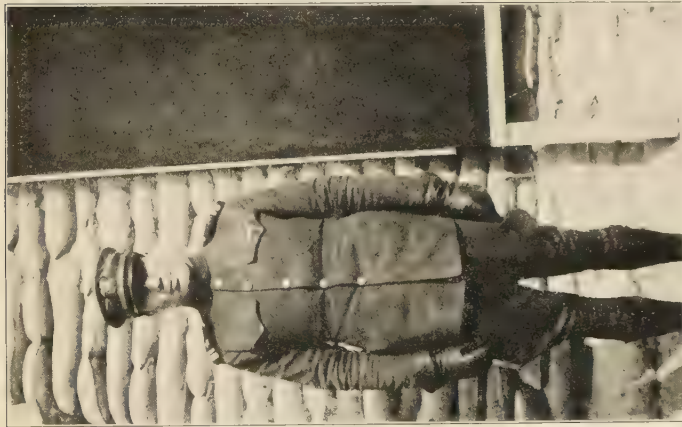
## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

He was dismayed to see, by the indicator, that his motor was dying. It came to a stop. Machine-gun bullets had crippled his Spad. There was nothing to it but a forced landing. Down he dropped with three Fokkers following all the way and spitting bullets at him. He saw a ploughed field and thanked his stars for that. With luck he might make it. He was a busy aviator, what with dodging the three persistent Fokkers and trying to avoid breaking his neck. However, it would have been a neat landing but for some telegraph wires which seemed to come floating out of space at him.

The Spad nosed into them and turned turtle, flopping over as if tired of the whole show. Gates crawled out, unhurt, and stared up at the three Fokkers. The German pilots circled over him, waved their arms in farewell and flew away. Their part of the job was done. They could claim credit for a French plane shot down in combat. *Hoch Der Kaiser!* Fishing out a box of matches, Gates set fire to his wrecked machine. This was easily done. It was dripping with gasoline from the bullet-punctured tank.

Not a German soldier was in sight when he hit the ground. Presto, and they came running from all directions. They seemed to be popping out of the ploughed field. There was great excitement. Gates was the only person who could find nothing to get excited about. He was quite willing to surrender, and there was that! He had been held for downs. The field where he fell was just back of the heavy artillery lines which explained why so many German soldiers and officers were handy to greet him. Three officers saw to it that he was properly captured. He was immediately and thoroughly searched. They took all his papers, his pocket-book with a thousand francs in it, and whatever else he had on him. He was not roughly treated. What they said about him in German he was unable to understand. They paraded him from one field





'DI' GATES, C.O. AT DUNKIRK



AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN GERMANY

Gates in center



## A PRISONER IN GERMANY

headquarters to another, by way of displaying the prize and in order to bother him with questions about the war, which they seemed to be very much fed-up with.

After a tiresome round of this nonsense, the prisoner was marched to Lenderlede and put in a guard-house. There he stayed from one o'clock until five in the afternoon when he had to plod on foot to Courtrai, a long walk of almost two hours. Nothing had been given him to eat all day nor had he been offered a drink of water. This weary march was diverted by a thrilling combat overhead, about fifteen British planes and the same number of Huns. Several machines were brought down, one of them in flames, and the enemy had all the worst of it. The British pilots were chasing them back to their own aerodromes and Gates was amused by the sight of one plucky Briton flying so low that he fairly hopped over the tree-tops as he buzzed after his own particular quarry.

Arriving at Courtrai there was more entertainment, two daylight bombing raids with the railway station as the target. Gates was taken into a restaurant where the guard ordered supper for himself. The prisoner had to go hungry. The best he could get was one glass of water. Courtrai was feeling nervous. The alarm was sounded for another air raid, after dark, and Gates was hustled into a dugout under the railway station. It was crammed full of German soldiers. The racket died out about eleven o'clock that night when Gates was shoved into a train bound to Ghent. More German soldiers, returning from the front, and standing room only.

The enterprising Gates was already determined to escape and take his chances of being shot for it. Now was the time, while he was still fairly close to his own lines, while the British armies were advancing nearer every day, and where the Belgian people would be kindly disposed. The farther he was carried into Germany the worse was his

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plight and the more remote the hope of extricating himself. During the night trip from Courtrai to Ghent, his mind was active with this scheme and that. He had a notion of jumping off the back platform of the railway carriage, and trying to leg it away in the dark. This was the most feasible stunt he could think of, but he was unable to bring it about.

At two in the morning the train reached Ghent. There Gates was put into a guard-room at the station. It had been a transient prison for many captured officers passing through Ghent. This was shown by their names written in pencil or scratched on the walls. They had left a sort of directory. Tired and famished, Gates studied the autographs with interest. There were the names of officers he had known, who had been reported as killed or missing or made prisoner. Among them was one name which he was delighted to find — 'Doc' Stevens, surgeon of his own command at the Dunkirk Naval Air Station. You will recall that Kenneth MacLeish describes the disaster in one of his letters, how a launch going to the rescue of a disabled seaplane was hit and sunk by the German coast batteries and that a 'large man in khaki' was reported as swimming ashore in No Man's Land. This was Dr. Stevens who, it was known, had walked smack into the German trenches when cast up by the sea.

Another name scribbled on the wall of the guard-room was that of a British aviator who had been shot down off the coast near Ostend. 'Di' Gates had flown to the rescue, but had arrived just too late. He saw five enemy seaplanes leaving the spot, one of which had picked up the castaway and made him a prisoner.

The sentry at the door of the guard-room had a Teutonic sense of humor. To while away the hours he made flourishes with his bayonet to indicate that the captives' throats were to be cut. It was a long night. Morning

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brought what was miscalled breakfast, a strange fluid that passed for coffee and a piece of war-bread with sawdust filling. This was the first food that Gates had tasted in twenty-four hours and it made no more than the merest dent in his appetite. His guard was kind enough to take him out for a walk in Ghent, by way of working up more appetite. They visited several prison camps, but apparently no room could be found for this bothersome American officer.

Lodgings were finally found in a comfortable dwelling-house in which the owner, a Belgian woman of refinement, quartered three officers of the German Flying Corps. Gates found himself most agreeably surprised. He had not dreamed of such treatment as this. He was given a good room, with an orderly to wait on him, and he sat at table with the three German officers. They were pleasant, mannerly fellows who spoke English. One belonged in naval aviation, the second was an army airman, and the third was attached to anti-aircraft. Their attitude was affable and chivalrous. The inference was that the American foe-man inspired their respect. He was more like a guest than a prisoner.

In the afternoon several German Red Cross nurses came in to dance to the music of a Victrola. They came again. It was quite jolly. One of the nurses talked excellent English. The three German officers were on rest leave in Ghent, so they said. They knew a great deal about the air services of the Allies and gave the names of various British squadrons, who commanded them, and where their aerodromes were situated. Gates knew the information to be correct. This sort of talk aroused his suspicions because he had heard a good deal about the efficiency of the German Intelligence Department. Was this pleasant residence a 'plant,' and these friendly officers decoys to beguile him into telling more than he ought to? Close-mouthed by



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nature, 'Di' Gates became cautious and wary. The hospitality was wasted on him. Later, when he compared notes with other prisoners at Karlsruhe, he found that some of them had been put through the same mill and he felt certain that his entertainers in Ghent were German Intelligence officers.

During these three days he used to sit and look out of a window of his room. This close-up view of a city held by the enemy was fascinating. Belgians and Germans, they passed him in review along the street. One episode haunted his memory — a hundred Belgian boys, shabby, frightened, sorrowful, led away by German soldiers, torn from homes and parents, to toil for their captors in distant shops and fields, pitiful slaves of war. Ghent was in a turmoil, with the British forces driving ahead in the last great push. They were only a few miles away and the sound of the artillery fire was thunderously incessant.

Ghent was bombed from the air almost every night. Gates risked being blown to kingdom come by his own friends. There was one tremendous crash that made him think, for a moment, that they had done the trick. It was the explosion of a 1650-pound bomb, the grandfather of all bombs, which had been lugged over Ghent by a British squadron with which Harry Davison happened to be flying. To have one of these things dropped by your own comrade was a bit too much.

The polite German officers had to rejoin their own squadrons, so they told Lieutenant Gates, and they were very sorry to lose his companionship. Now all this courteous treatment was radically changed. He was taken to a camp, or building, which had been a Belgian civil prison. It was like being thrown into a penitentiary. He was separated from a friend he had made, Lieutenant Bucknell, of the Royal Air Force, and put in a small cell for fifteen days' solitary confinement.

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The guards were ordered to hold no conversation with him. For exercise he was allowed to move about in a courtyard an hour a day. The food was wretched and scanty, a cup of imitation coffee and a hunk of dubious bread at seven in the morning, a plate of mysterious soup at noon, and coffee and bread at five. It was a diet to pull down a man's strength and sap his energies. And a fortnight of solitary confinement, with nobody to talk to and almost nothing to read, would have rasped ordinary nerves to shreds. Gates insists that it wasn't so bad. He endured it like a stoic.

By October 22d the Germans were ready to evacuate the city. Their fighting columns still held it, but were certain to be driven out by the British advance which was only six miles distant. Gates was taken from his cell to the office of the military warden where he met Lieutenant Bucknell. They were escorted to the railway station by a spindling sergeant and two scrawny privates. Gates could have wiped up the street with the three of them. However, they were armed to the teeth. They showed him that their rifles were loaded. No monkey tricks!

As they trudged along he noted that the rifles were slung on their backs by leather straps. His mind was active. He was resolved to try to escape before they put him on a train for Germany. There would be a little interval before the three guards could unsling the rifles and begin shooting at him. He waited until the street took a crooked turn past a small park. No bullet could follow him around a corner.

He was all set to make a reckless sprint of it. Away he leaped, while the dunder-headed guards gaped at him. A few strides and he might have been out of range of their rifles. Alas, he slipped and stumbled and sprawled headlong. A Yale run spoiled by a muddy field! Ruefully he picked himself up. He was not so sorry as he might have been. The sergeant had jerked out an automatic pistol and

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was about to take a snap-shot. Lieutenant Artemus Gates was not a target to miss at close range. They damned him elaborately in German. By way of playing it safe, his wrist was handcuffed to the wrist of a guard for the rest of the promenade to the railway station.

The station was filled with soldiers. Lieutenant Gates's runty escort told them of his attempt to get away. He attracted much attention. A desperate scoundrel, no doubt. He looked the part. There was no chance to attempt another escape from the train as it rolled toward Brussels. Gates and Bucknell were put in a compartment the door of which was locked. A guard sat at each window. They roused out their prisoners at two in the morning of October 23d and put them in a guard-room at Brussels. They stretched themselves on a bench and slept now and then. One incident left an impression. Into the room a Belgian peasant girl was thrust as a prisoner. She was a handsome creature of her kind, with a proud and courageous composure. She could not help sobbing and then her pride would steady her again. What had she done and what fate was foreshadowed? Gates wondered. He felt profoundly sorry for her, unable to help. She was a pitiable bit of flotsam in the turbid swirl of things.

All the next day Gates, Lieutenant Bucknell and the three guards traveled by train to Cologne. A few hours' delay there and at midnight they were moving on to Karlsruhe. During this last stage the German sergeant and the two skinny privates became quite easy and genial. They were making the best of it. This was especially true of the sergeant who cast an amorous eye at the buxom young woman who held the job of conductor, or railway guard. The two privates enviously looked on while the *fräulein* sat on the sergeant's lap. It was a sensible way of getting on with the war.

Gates was dumped out at Karlsruhe at dawn, sleepy,

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hungry, aching with fatigue. He was first taken to a hotel used as a prison and there he was kept for two days. The circumstances were peculiar and suggested another stratagem of the German Intelligence. Gates surmised that dictaphones were installed in the rooms. He was interviewed by a German officer with a map who coaxed him to talk about this sector and that. On the second day he and Lieutenant Bucknell were locked in a room with Lieutenant Sparks of a British infantry command who had been caught in a trench raid. They felt confident that whatever they said was heard and reported.

From the hotel they went to the prison camp. It was a distribution centre for captured officers, from which they were sent in groups to various permanent camps. There was a curious assortment of these prisoners, British, American, French, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Belgian. They were quartered in small wooden barrack buildings set in a large yard which was surrounded by three separated barricades of barbed wire vigilantly patrolled. There was room in the enclosure for such exercise as walking, volley ball, etc. The imprisoned officers were not compelled to work at all. So long as they obeyed the regulations they were left to themselves, except at roll-call.

Here they first came in contact with the wonderful organization and benefactions of the American Red Cross. Gates had found a touching spirit of friendliness among the Belgian people of Ghent. Civilians had smuggled him in a little money, cigarettes, and matches. And the Belgian Red Cross had succeeded in giving him a package containing underclothes, socks, comb, toothbrush, and some biscuits. This had helped to make life endurable. At Karlsruhe it was found that the American Red Cross supplied most of the necessities of life to the officers of its own flag. It gave them most of the food they ate and all the clothing they wore. They blessed it as literally saving their lives.



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In the weekly ration from this source were coffee, tea, canned hash, bully beef, crackers, jam, tobacco, condensed milk. Of the German ration the noon meal was the only one that suggested nourishment. Breakfast and supper were prepared on the barracks stoves from the Red Cross supplies.

Of course Gates made a try at escaping from this Karlsruhe camp. With Colonel Brown of the American Army as a partner, he tore up the planks of his shack with the idea of digging a tunnel under the wire fences. They did not get far for lack of tools, but their zeal was one hundred per cent. The German soldiers told them it wasn't really worth while making such a fuss over imprisonment. The war was almost over. The Kaiser was licked. They were expecting to spend Christmas at home. It struck Gates as amusing that he was able to cash a check for five pounds at the prison canteen. It was drawn on Morgan, Harjes & Co. For all the German official knew, the bit of paper might be perfectly worthless. He had faith in American financial integrity, at any rate.

On November 2d, Gates was transferred with twenty-six other American officers from Karlsruhe to a camp at Villingen. This was how the order read, but Artemus Gates had other ideas in his head. He proposed to break the railway journey somewhere this side of Villingen. He was in the mood to try anything once. He and his fellow officers were put into a car with twelve German soldiers as a guard. It was not divided into small compartments, but had one partition running across the middle of it. They were able to move about.

Gates found an audacious American army captain of his own mettle, Ford by name, who expressed a readiness to risk breaking his neck by jumping from the train while in motion. Ford sauntered to the rear platform of the car and found it unguarded. He conferred with Gates. On the



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partition wall were two railway maps, one on either side of the door. Studying them, it was discovered that the route to Villingen passed through several tunnels. It was decided to leave the train in one of these tunnels. They managed to remove the maps from the wall and secrete them in their pockets.

With such an exploit in mind, Gates had provided himself with a bottle of camp coffee, a can of bully beef, and a small box of crackers. This was his emergency ration for a cross-country flight through Germany. He wore an American army overcoat, a checkered cloth cap, and flying boots with thin soles.

The train passed through tunnel after tunnel while Gates delayed action. The train was carrying him in the direction of the Swiss frontier which was his goal. It was arranged that Ford should make his jump from the back platform. Gates would slip into the lavatory, lock the door, and take his departure through the window. They waited until only two tunnels were left between them and Villingen. Now was the time. The next tunnel! To wait for the last one might bring them too near the town, and it would be betting the whole stake on one card.

Ford moved to the rear of the car. Gates strolled into the lavatory. It was daylight, about the middle of the afternoon. Presently the window darkened. The train passed into the tunnel. Providentially there was a grade to climb and the speed slowed to something like fifteen miles an hour. Gates went out through the window feet foremost so that he could hang by his hands for a moment before letting go. He had learned how to fall on the football field. Nevertheless, when he dropped he was sent sprawling on his head. His face collided violently with the gravel ballast of the road-bed. He was giddy and breathless. However, he was a man who had battered his way through the Harvard football team, and had methodically set fire

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to his plane after crashing from 12,000 feet in the air. One is reminded of Erl Gould's mess attendant at Key West from whom the flat-iron bounced off.

Picking himself up, 'Di' Gates saw the train go rumbling out of the tunnel. Ford had failed to make his exit from the back platform. Gates was therefore playing a lone hand. He was in the rugged, wooded country of the Black Forest. All he had for guidance was the purloined railway map. He limped from the tunnel and sought a hiding-place in a heavy growth of trees not far away. In this spectacular manner was begun a flight of four days and nights through a region hostile and unknown. This was on November 2d.

He remained hidden among the trees until after dark. Then he began his journey afoot, in the direction of Villingen, now walking on a highway, again on the railroad track. He moved slowly, with frequent halts, his nerves taut. The darkness sheltered him, but it seemed mysterious and sinister. He was afraid that soldiers had been sent out from Villingen to search for him or to intercept him. It was nearing midnight when he approached Villingen. The lights warned him. Under a brilliant arc-light he was able to discern the figure of a soldier in the road. He appeared to be stationed there for a purpose. Gates suspected himself to be the purpose, wherefore he passed wide of the arc-light, making an end-run through a field.

Unmolested, he fetched a circuit around Villingen and returned to his route as indicated on the map. The railway line was a guide. It enabled him to keep his bearings when the highways became confusing. During this first night he covered twenty miles. It was an extraordinary display of dogged endurance. Physically he was below par. For a month he had been inactive, half the time in solitary confinement. He had lacked sufficient food. All he had to sustain him now was a can of beef and a few crackers. The

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flyng-boots were the poorest kind of foot-gear for a tramp of this kind.

At daylight, after this first night's long march, he found cover in a patch of woodland. He was desperately in need of sleep and yet the weather was so cold and wet that he shivered miserably and slept by fits and starts. A swig of cold coffee and he filled the bottle with water, thus weakening the mixture every time he took a drink of it. However, it had some color and flavor and he could fool himself to this extent. A few mouthfuls a day of his store of food, broken sleep, feet that were already swelling! Nightfall found him once more on his perilous journey.

During the second night he progressed no more than ten miles. This was because of exhaustion. He found that he was falling asleep if he stopped to reconnoiter. He was too tired to walk around every town he came to. In the evening he plodded along the railway track straight through a village. The station master spied him and was suspicious. The fugitive took alarm and speedily found a hiding-place out in the country.

Somewhere along here he heard two voices, unmistakably American, coming out of a darkened field.

'Listen, buddy,' said one of them, 'when do you figure we'll get out of here?'

'These Heinies think the war is due to blow up mighty soon. Gee, I wish I was somewheres else.'

Gates halted to listen, but dared not call out. It seemed uncanny. His conjecture was that these were two captured doughboys who had been loaned to a German farmer to work on his land.

The fugitive found that he was too tired to feel hungry. He ate cabbage leaves now and then and took a pull at his coffee-flavored bottle. Mist and rain drenched him. Late in this second night he stumbled into the town of Immendingen on the headwaters of the Danube where the

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river was quite narrow. The street was quiet, all the people in bed, but the dogs barked at him and he was unlucky enough to blunder into a soldier on sentry duty. This squarehead fired a shot, apparently as a signal, and poor Gates took to his heels.

He ran until he could duck and hide in the railway yard. Here he was undiscovered, but he had to figure out some way of crossing the Danube. It was too cold to swim and he felt certain the bridge would be guarded. He hid under a freight car to think it over. It was so close to the bridge that he could hear the sentries talking when the guard was changed. A switch engine was bumping about in the yard. Gates concluded to try concealing himself on a car and so get hauled across the bridge.

With this in mind, he clambered aboard a little freight car just as a German brakeman appeared over the other end of it. It was an unexpected meeting for both of them. In this foolish manner they popped up and stared at each other. Gates moved first. He had conceived a sudden dislike for this mode of travel. He dived from the car and was running when he lit. He scooted under a car on another siding like a rabbit in a brier patch. There he cogitated and resolved to crawl across the wagon bridge and take a chance on slipping through the blockade. He couldn't spend the rest of the night fiddling about in this railway yard.

Crawl he did, on hands and knees, dragging himself all the way across that cursed bridge, his heart thumping with the fear of detection. Safely he reached the farther end of it, and no guard was there! It was to rejoice. Thankfully he stole into the road, went a little way, and discovered that he was on an *island*. A second bridge was in front of him. A cruel anti-climax. He was too disgusted to be prudent. Straight he walked across this second bridge.

And straight he walked into the arms of a sentry. This



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may have been one of the fellows whose voices had been heard when the guard was changed. Gates was surprised. The sentry likewise. He stood with his gun slung over his shoulder by the strap. 'Halt!' he shouted, and then a guttural question.

Gates was badly rattled. Addressed in a foreign tongue, he replied in kind, but his choice of a language was tactless and unfortunate.

*'Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?'* he blurted.

The beans were spilled. Insulted by these odious words, the sentry unlimbered his rifle and emptied the magazine. These five shots missed a dark figure which flitted into a field near by. Gates zigged when the bullets zagged. They went by him. For a man with badly swollen feet, he displayed marvelous agility. He vanished in the misty darkness and was seen no more in Immendingen on the Danube. He had left the two bridges behind him. He was this much ahead of the game.

Two sentries poked about in the field, hunting for him with lanterns. From the secluded obscurity of a hill he looked down at them, the lanterns bobbing about like enormous fireflies. The hill was wooded, so he tucked himself in there for the rest of the night and all the next day. He was coming to the end of his endurance. He could force himself to travel not much more than five miles in a night. In truth, exposure and starvation had worn him to the bone.

What cheered him as he huddled wretchedly was the prospect that another night's slow progress ought to carry him as far as Singen which the railway map showed him to be only six miles from the Swiss frontier. He would just about do that much, he thought, although he was near the end of his rope.

And now misfortune played a cruel joke on him. During this third night he lost his way. One railway line went



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straight ahead through Singen to the border. Another swung off to the left from Singen and led to Constance. Unaware of his mistake, misled in the darkness, he took the wrong track at Singen and plodded along the road to Constance. It was a case of gritting his teeth and putting one foot in front of the other. Every mile was a journey. He went until he was sure he must have traversed the distance from Singen to the frontier and freedom, but the track still stretched in front of him, seemingly extending into infinity. Gloomily he suspected that he had gone wrong — or was possibly in Switzerland. The approach of dawn warned him to seek a hiding-place.

All he could find was a swamp. There he lay all day, in mud and water and tangled grass, unable to sleep, chilled through and through. His spirit was unbroken. He was still indomitable. He was good for one more night. Floundering from the swamp, he resumed the slow march along the railway track. He felt certain now that he had taken the wrong track from Singen. The supposition was that he was on the road to Constance which was in Germany, or so he deduced from his map.

He managed to keep moving all through the night, a scarecrow of a figure in sodden, mud-plastered garments, with a month's growth of beard, the cloth cap sagging over his ears. Day was breaking when he came within sight of a city. A railway bridge intervened. He had to cross it. Behind him he saw a number of men also crossing. He took them to be workmen. They blocked his retreat. There was no turning back. To his immense relief he put the bridge behind him without capture by a guard.

Beyond him was a railway station. Advancing, he could read the name 'Constance' on it. For the first time in twenty-four hours he knew where he was. He was hurrying past the station as best he could when a sentry suddenly confronted him. The soldier wore the German uniform.

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He threw up his rifle and barred the way. Three yards farther on the tracks passed through a gap in a barbed-wire fence. Now Gates comprehended that part of Constance was German and part Swiss. The fence was the boundary. Beaten, with only three yards to gain! There was no running away from this sentry and his rifle. Nor could Gates have run far or fast. The sentry took malicious pleasure in pointing out the fact that liberty had been no more than three strides away.

Gates took it without whimpering. He had nothing to say when he was put into the guard-house on the German side of the border. They gave him coffee and bread. As usual, an Intelligence officer tried to pry information out of him. Then he was placed in a cell of the city prison where he slept for a day and a half on end, dead to the world. His feet were badly swollen, but gave him no great amount of pain. He felt benumbed all over. Back by train he went to Villingen, the prison camp of his original destination, and was given twenty-one days' solitary confinement.

This was no hardship, as he regarded it. He had a warm bed and fresh clothing. The Red Cross took pains to see that his wants were supplied. He had good food and reading matter, and best of all, a reunion with 'Doc' Stevens, a prisoner in the same camp. The kindly surgeon cooked special dishes for Lieutenant Gates who enjoyed them when the bungling guard didn't carry them in to the wrong prisoner. Gates said it was like Heaven.

His solitary confinement sentence was cut short by the news of the Armistice. He was released from the cell next day and permitted to join Dr. Stevens's mess. In the camp were one hundred and sixty American Army officers and six skippers of merchant steamers which had been captured by German raiders. Peace had come, but these prisoners were held at Villingen a fortnight longer. They were so

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impatient that four of them succeeded in escaping. Conditions were chaotic. A German soldiers' and sailors' council deposed the commandant of the prison, a stiff-necked Prussian colonel of the old school, and put the adjutant in his place.

The prisoners were allowed to walk out in the town on parole. They saw the German regiments come streaming back from the front, flying the red flag, in open revolt against the military machine. They had deposed their officers and were running things to suit themselves. The war was over, they were homeward bound, and the Imperial German Government could go to hell.

On November 26th, two hundred and thirty American officers and thirty American soldiers were mustered from the Villingen camp and elsewhere and put in a train to be sent through to Constance. Colonel Brown was in charge and selected Lieutenant Gates as one of his staff officers. At Constance an important event occurred. Gates shaved off his whiskers. He ceased to resemble a man whom you would be afraid to meet in the dark.

He had pretty well recovered from his experience as an escaped prisoner, barring an infection of one arm. This was growing worse instead of better. The inflamed condition indicated serious blood poisoning. Dr. Stevens looked after it with great skill and devotion. A little later, infection developed in the other arm. With no other instruments than a penknife and a pair of nail scissors, Dr. Stevens opened and drained the infected areas. Gates gave him credit for saving his life.

A special train carried them from Constance through Switzerland to France. The Swiss people showered them with kindnesses wherever the train stopped long enough, cheering crowds, delicacies to eat, brass bands, at Berne, Zurich, Geneva. A messenger passed through the train inquiring for Lieutenant Gates. He had been sent by the

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Red Cross at the personal instance of Mr. Davison. The condition of the infected arms was so grave that Gates was put to bed in the hospital car. There he stayed until the train rolled into France where nobody made any fuss over these exiles of war.

Gates, with other prisoners, was taken to an American Army hospital in Alleraï. He was kept there in spite of his protests that the Army had no right to hold a naval officer against his will. His health improving, he succeeded in obtaining three days' leave to go to Paris. There he reported at Naval Aviation Headquarters and so managed to cut himself free of Army red-tape. Paris was filled with rejoicing, delirious soldiers of many races. Gates found some of his friends. Without delay, he went to report to Captain Hanrahan at the headquarters of the Northern Bombing Group. Then he made for Dunkirk, just for a little visit, to shake hands with the gang, as many as were still at the station. And so he crossed to England and was sent home on the battleship *Arkansas* which sailed for Brest on December 12th to join the majestic parade of warships that escorted President Woodrow Wilson to the shores of France.

Alive and well, 'Di' Gates had weathered his perils and escapes and could receive the awards he had so well earned.<sup>1</sup> The French Government made him a Chevalier of

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER A. L. GATES

Period from April 1 to June 30, 1918:

Exceptionally able and efficient officer. Most excellent pilot. Qualified for any flying duty or command (land or seaplanes). Did war flying with British and received highest commendations.

C. DE C. CHEVALIER, *Lieut. U.S.N.*

Period July 1 to December 9, 1918:

A most capable, efficient commanding officer with high sense of devotion to duty. An excellent pilot. Recommended for promotion. Has unusual command of officers and men.

D. C. HANRAHAN, *Captain U.S.N.*

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the Legion of Honor and conferred upon him the Croix de Guerre with Palm. The latter was sent to his mother by Rear Admiral Wilson with the following letter, from Brest:

December 21, 1918

MY DEAR MRS. GATES:

I am forwarding to you under separate cover a citation and a Croix de Guerre awarded by the Republic of France to your son, Lieutenant Artemus L. Gates, U.S.N.R.F. for his conspicuous bravery and conduct while in aerial combat with the enemy. After many engagements with the enemy your son was finally forced to land on enemy soil due to his machine being placed out of commission. He succeeded in burning his machine before being taken prisoner.

In forwarding this citation and Croix de Guerre, I wish to add my very sincere appreciation and approval of the services rendered by your son for our country, as well as for France. He has nobly upheld the traditions of the United States Navy and the Navy is very proud of him.

I request that you kindly present the citation, the Croix de Guerre, and my message to your son for me.

With kindest regards, I am

Very sincerely

H. B. WILSON, *Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy*  
*Commander U.S. Naval Forces in France*

### One of the French citations testified that

This very skillful and brave pilot distinguished himself July 28th, and August 22d, 1918, in searching for and saving some Allied aviators who had fallen into the sea and were under fire from enemy batteries. In scout flying he showed the same love for danger and was forced down October 4th, 1918, following a combat against superior forces.

That he had won the respect of his own superior officers was more pleasing to 'Di' Gates than these unusual official honors. Here is a letter received by his mother. It was written in London on December 12, 1918:

MY DEAR MADAME:

It has been my great fortune as Commanding Officer of U.S.



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Naval Aviation over here to have your son Lieutenant A. L. Gates under my command for the past year. He immediately took a leading part in our organization and, due to his courage and ability, we are all proud of his record as an officer in command of one of the most important stations. His official record on file in the Navy Department is of the highest order, but I have grown to admire him so much that I want his mother to know it.

Needless to say, we were all overjoyed when he turned up a prisoner in Germany and yesterday he called on me and I found him looking fine and well. With hearty congratulations to the mother of such a son, I am

Sincerely

H. I. CONE

Mention has been made of the fact that Admiral Sims had already recommended Gates for the Congressional Medal of Honor because of his rescue of the survivors of the British seaplane near Dunkirk. In an amplified report to the Secretary of the Navy, after hostilities had ceased, Admiral Sims cited Lieutenant A. L. Gates as the second of only three officers attached to the Naval Forces in Europe for whom he recommended the Medal of Honor:

This officer commanded the U.S. Naval Air Station, Dunkirk, France, with very marked efficiency, and under almost constant shell and bomb fire from the enemy. Alone and unescorted he rescued the crew of a British airplane wrecked in the sea off Ostend for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross by the British Government. This act of bravery was actually over and above the duties required of this officer and in itself demonstrates the highest type of courage. Lieutenant Commander Gates took part in a number of flights over the enemy's lines and was shot down in combat and taken prisoner by the enemy. He made several heroic and determined efforts to escape. During all of his service this officer was a magnificent example of courage, modesty, and energetic devotion to duty. He at all times upheld the very highest traditions of the Naval Service.

## CHAPTER XLIX

### KENNETH MACLEISH'S PATH TO GLORY

Now we are names that once were young  
And had our will of living weather,  
Loved dark pines and the thin moon's feather,  
Fought and endured our souls and flung  
Our laughter to the ends of earth,  
And challenged heaven with our spacious mirth.

Now we are names and men shall come  
To drone their memorable words;  
How we went out with shouting swords  
And high, devoted hearts; the drum  
Shall trouble us with stuttered roll,  
And stony Latin laud the hero soul;

And generations unfulfilled,  
The heirs of all we struggled for,  
Shall here recall the mythic war,  
And marvel how we stabbed and killed,  
And name us savage, brave, austere, —  
And none shall think how very young we were.

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH, *'On a Memorial Stone'*

WITH extraordinary fidelity, Kenneth MacLeish was able to perpetuate himself in his letters and by so doing to fashion his own memorial. This was the theme of an address by the Reverend Charles W. Gilkey at the service in Kenneth's honor in his home town, Glencoe, on February 2, 1919. It was said, in part:

You may remember that about the time we entered the war, the Atlantic Monthly published a collection of very remarkable letters written by young French soldiers at the front to their families and friends; letters that breathed not only an intense patriotism and utter devotion to their country, but a spiritual insight and religious faith that revealed the very soul of France. Shortly afterward I happened to be discussing these letters with the principal of one of our leading preparatory schools, who



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during the last twenty years has come in close personal contact with thousands of American boys in their teens. He said he felt entirely confident that in the call to their country's service, and under the test of battle, our young men would show themselves as true patriots and as brave fighters as these Frenchmen; but he did not believe that they would be able to express their deeper feelings as these men had done, or that they would reveal any such capacity for spiritual insight and faith. It was a very natural judgment and reasonable expectation about our American youth as we knew them; but the event has shown that in the doubt of their spiritual quality he was wrong.

This is not to say that every American soldier has proved to be an idealist at heart, or has found it easy or even possible to utter his deepest motives and highest aspirations; but neither was this true of every young Frenchman. It is simply to say that among us, as among them, some rare spirits have proved in the furnace of actual warfare to be pure gold; and that this quality has appeared, not only in their conduct at the front, but no less authentically in their letters home. The mintage may have been as different as their national characteristics and types of mind, but the metal was the same. Some of these letters have already found, in magazine or memoir, the permanence they deserve. Many more will be cherished, in homes and communities and hearts all over our land, as worthy memorials and revealing utterances of a young manhood as noble in spirit as America or any other land ever reared.

Kenneth MacLeish is one of those rare spirits who will live on in the hearts of us who knew and loved him, not only because of his spotless life and gallant death, but because in his own letters he has revealed what manner of man he was, what spirit and purpose sustained him in his hazardous line of service, what faith upheld him as he looked steadily into the face of death.

In the course of this story of the First Yale Unit, many of these letters have been woven into the fabric of events as they occurred and as Kenneth found himself in this environment or that, at home and abroad. Fate so ordered it that he was not to write many more of them. From March until the first of June, you will recall, he was flying at the front with Squadron 213, R.A.F., and officially attached to



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the Northern Bombing Group. Receiving his promotion as lieutenant, junior grade, he went through the course at Clermont-Ferrand and then returned to Dunkirk, recommended for the billet of flight commander.<sup>1</sup> He now joined Squadron 218 operating near Calais. One more letter, of those written at this time, finds him in a mood quite different from the high spirits in which most of them are keyed.

AIR STATION, DUNKIRK, July 10, 1918

DEAR OLD HENRY:

It's many a weary day since I've taken up my pen to converse with you and for that I'm truly sorry. I'm afraid you will have to class me as an *embuscade* and a slacker. I really am. I don't know whether I have told you what they are doing to me. Anyway, I'll repeat it if you can stand the tale of woe. This is the third time I have been to the front since the first of April. In April I went out on Camels with the R.N.A.S. In May I went out on seaplanes with the U.S. Naval Aviation Forces. In June I was at an army school way down near Vichy learning to fly day-bombing machines. In July I'm up here near Calais with Squadron 218, Royal Air Service, doing day-bombing on an entirely different type of machine, and in August I'm going out again on another type with Navy pilots. This is the third organization I've flown with, and this type of machine is the twelfth different type I have trained on or flown.

<sup>1</sup> From the Fitness Reports, Navy Department:

LIEUTENANT KENNETH MACLEISH

Period from 4 September to 21 September, 1918:

A very efficient, zealous and capable officer. A fine example of what the Reserve Force gives us.

G. DE CHEVALIER, Lt. U.S.N.

Period from 30 July to 21 August, 1918:

I believe this officer to be exceptionally efficient and valuable to the service.

BENJ. BRISCOE, Lt. Cdr. U.S.N.R.F.

My opinion of this officer is that he is one of the highest types that I have had any experience with — one who, by his manner, appearance and ability, is a real credit to the service.

S. L. H. HAZARD, Lt. Comdr., U.S.N.

Period from 1 April to 5 July, 1918:

This officer is known to be one of the most experienced and efficient pilots of our force.

D. C. HANRAHAN, Commander, U.S.N.

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All the hope or enthusiasm I ever had of helping out in this war has left me — left me in a 'don't care' mood, so blue and hopeless that I don't think I'll ever be the same. This constant discouragement has got under my skin so deeply that I'm absolutely sick, mentally and physically. I've lost eleven pounds and all the pep I ever had. Please, Henry, what shall I do? With the exception of those two glorious months when I was really doing something, I have been discouraged and misled the whole six months. That's enough to take the nerve out of any one, and it remains to be seen whether I have lost mine. I think I have, but I'll know for certain as soon as I cross the lines with this outfit, because there is plenty of activity in the air these days in this sector. Yesterday, out of ten machines, six were all shot up by 'Archie.' They were under fire forty-five minutes straight. That's at least twenty minutes too much for any one.

A terrible thing happened the other day up at Dunkirk. It was terrible because it was so foolishly unnecessary, and so little to be expected. One of our seaplanes was down with a dud motor. The Doc and six enlisted men went out to pick it up. They evidently had a bad compass, because the next thing we knew a report came in that our launch was off Nieuport and going *east!* The lines are at Nieuport. A few minutes later we got a message to the effect that the launch was being shelled by the shore batteries and was then between Westende and Middlekerque. A few minutes later we heard that it had been hit and sunk. Next we heard that they were swimming. Then it was reported that a large man in khaki had come ashore in No Man's land, and with hands above his head walked into the Hun trenches. That was the Doc. He is a wonderful swimmer and so was another man who landed behind the Hun lines. The poorer swimmers allowed the favoring tide to carry them behind our lines, and two very poor swimmers never got in at all. There were only two life-belts, not a single gun of any description, and only one compass which evidently went wrong.

Wasn't that pathetic? As it was, they all had at least four miles to swim. Two swam eight miles, but they had a four-knot tide behind them. Old 'Doc' Stevens used to be my English prof up at Hotchkiss in 1910-1911. It was quite a coincidence that we should meet up here in this hole. He speaks perfect German and took his degree in medicine at a German university,

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so unless he still has his classroom belligerence he will be all right.

Did I tell you that they made me a lieutenant (junior grade) and that soon I'm to be a lieutenant (senior grade) in command of the first day-bombing squadron sent out by the Navy? I suppose I ought to be happy. As a matter of fact, I'm more than ever disappointed, because it means I won't be allowed to fly — and that will *kill* me.

In August, Lieutenant MacLeish was sent to Pauillac to test the day-bombing machines equipped with Liberty motors. On the 28th, he wrote his father from Paris:

I wish I could tell you how very proud I am to be your son these days. Your spirit is perfectly wonderful and it is the strongest kind of an incentive to keep us going over here. Every chance that I get to help in this mess I take with the knowledge that I am fighting not only for the principles that I think are right, but for you, and in an attempt to be worthy of you and your expectations of me.

Just at present I am stationed here in Paris, with nothing very much to keep me busy. I expect to be sent to England in the near future on a job which embraces a whole new set of powers. I have always been fond of machines and engines, and they are picking on me for all the dirty work in connection with the arming of machines and bombs as well as the installation of the far-famed Liberty motor. I know little or nothing, except that it has lots of power and sounds good. I tested out an American-built machine with a Liberty motor while I was down at Pauillac, and I was surely pleased with it. I did all kinds of stunts with it and the plane and engine both behaved admirably. I only wish they could catch the people who are ruining the engines before they reach us and after they leave the factory. Even whole bolts are taken out of the engine, and in one instance we found that the bushings had been taken out of the bearing, so that the crank-shaft would have broken if we had tried to run it in that condition.

I expect to fly up to Calais in a few days, but I don't know when I will get the chance. I am living in a perfect horror of one thing: Since they gave me my last raise in rank, they have not seemed to favor the idea of letting me go up to the front any

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more. They say I am not to risk getting hurt, as they want me for a desk job. Isn't that about enough to drive a man to drink? They haven't given me much chance to show whether I can take care of myself or not. If I have to sit through the rest of this war without ever doing any more fighting, it will simply break my heart. I came over here to fight, and that's what I want to do, because I can never make myself feel that I am helping to win the war while I am sitting behind a desk.

The last raise in rank to which he refers was his full lieutenantancy for which he was commissioned in August. He was sent to Eastleigh in September where he was made First Flight Officer. Here it was his duty to receive, examine, and, when necessary, repair the new DH.-4s sent from the United States and fly them across to Dunkirk. During the month and more that Kenneth spent at Eastleigh, his one supreme desire was to get back to the front and have a part in the conflict. Twice he was offered the position of squadron commander, first of night bombers, later of day bombers. This was a high honor and a safe job, but he replied that if he were to be given a choice in the matter he would decline, because a squadron commander was not allowed to fly, and he felt that his chance for service lay in single-seater work, and his heart was set on fighting over the lines. However, he had ceased to chafe and fret and could find pleasure in the practical, constructive aspects of his work at Eastleigh. His normal humor restored, he wrote, on September 8th:

EASTLEIGH, ENGLAND, *September 8*

Well, my guess was correct — here I am in England and at the very station I thought I was being sent to. It is a veritable heaven for me, under the circumstances, because as long as I can't go to the front for a while, the only thing that could even begin to take its place is this job, where I can fool around in a machine shop with engines and planes; and the wonderful part about it is that I have absolute authority to do just as I please, for they have honored me with the job of final acceptance and



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test officer, and that is quite a job. I am responsible for the machines that leave here for the front, and if the slightest thing goes wrong with them, I pay the penalty. With so much responsibility there is quite a bit of freedom, of course, and that is where the fun comes in. If I don't like the design of a machine, I can redesign it, if it gets as bad as that. So you see, it is pretty fine putting my pet little ideas about aeroplanes into practice. I'm *so* sure that we can improve on the type we have here and I'm waiting with bated breath for the day when the first one is ready to try out. I figure that by refining it in some ways, strengthening it in others, and stream-lining certain parts, I can get at least five miles per hour more speed, and carry twenty or thirty pounds more, and still have it stronger than it was to begin with. It should be so, because on paper it shows twice as much as that, but we shall see when the time comes.

And then came the glorious news that he was to be relieved of this safe berth, Dave Ingalls reluctantly swapping places with him. Back to his old British squadron, 213! The last letter that Kenneth ever wrote was sent to Miss Guthrie in Paris, October 10th, and told her how happy he felt at receiving these orders.

*October 10, 1918*

DEAR AUNT EMMA:

So Dave has told you the news? Well, isn't it wonderful? And I have an absolutely clear conscience about the whole thing, because it all happened without a word from me. I flew a new bus over to one of the squadrons, and it happened that the captain saw me, and asked me where I was going. I told him that I was on my way back, and he said 'No, you're not going back. You are going out to Squadron 213 again.' I nearly fell on his neck and kissed him. If I were not scared that he would knock me down, I would have too.

Hasn't Dave Ingalls done wonderfully? He has been recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross, and he got four Huns, to say nothing of a balloon or two, and he did some marvelous work at low altitudes strafing the Hun trenches and their transports. I was tickled to death at the chance of seeing and being with him, and I hate to leave so soon, but when you can do your duty and get as much fun out of it as I shall be able



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to get up at the front, why, nothing should keep you back, should it? I feel as fit as a fiddle these days. Gee! I hope I get under way soon.

At the various stations to which he had been shifted about, Kenneth MacLeish made an impression. He was remembered as a man who stood out among the others. 'Bob' Lovett testified to this.

Of all the members of the Unit individually, I believe I heard more favorable reports on Ken MacLeish, particularly after the reports from the English schools came in. In them his standing was always remarkably high, and I think Captain Cone used this as an excellent argument in favor of promoting Ken in time to place him in command of one of the proposed day squadrons. Furthermore, Ken's greatest contribution to the service was his outline of training for single-seaters in gunnery and acrobatics. I am convinced that a layman, reading Ken's description of the proper way to loop, would find no great difficulty in doing so.

In a letter which Lovett wrote to Archie MacLeish, soon after Kenneth's death, is to be found an account of the attempt to make him a squadron commander against his will.

*October 26, 1919*

DEAR ARCH:

I have spent the day looking over the box of papers, maps, orders, and so on, that arrived only a few days ago, and it seems evident that the letters I spoke of were lost with the baggage at St. Nazaire when the storehouse was broken into and looted. One good has come from the papers on hand, and that is the refreshing of my memory as to small and important details, and therefore I am going to give you as accurately as possible the account of Ken's correspondence regarding the night bombing squadron, because I think that for sheer singleness of purpose, for real idealism and for rare spirit, nothing I have ever heard of can equal it. Furthermore, I want Kenney's mother to know about an act which, for bravery of the sternest kind, cannot be equalled; and, again, it will explain better than anything else Ken's attitude toward the war and toward his friends.

The night bombing squadrons, known as the 'Night Wing,

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Northern Bombing Group,' were planned long in advance of the possibility of getting equipment, material, or personnel, and it was not until July 1918, that they first took the field at St. Inglevert. This first squadron was equipped with makeshift machines — Capronis, to tide over until our Handley-Pages arrived, and it started operations August 15, 1918, with a raid on Ostend, in which the Quai des Pacque-boats was hit. From that time we were attached to 5th Group, 81st Wing, R.A.F., and our personnel manned their machines, since their men were practically used up in the March offensive. Night bombers were in the greatest demand and the whole air offensives in the naval area were dependent upon but three squadrons — 214 R.A.F., 238 R.A.F. (equipped with one-motor busses and worthless, since they carried only two 112 lb. bombs) and U.S.N.A.F. No. 1 acting with No. 214, the Handley-Pages. Accordingly our program was increased and every effort was made to get Handley-Pages from England to last us until October, when ours were due. This was done, and delivery was expected in the latter part of September. It became necessary therefore to get our next squadrons, Nos. 2, 3, and 4, in the field. At this time I was Squadron Commander of U.S.N.A.F. No. 1 and Acting Wing Commander.

The next question was one of commanding officers, these being the making of a squadron or its failure as an efficient fighting unit of people itching to fly. Well, on September 10th I obtained permission from the Group Commander to appoint two commanding officers of the embryo squadrons and chose 'Ken' as the best fitted for the post. Though not a night bomber, he was an experienced fighter and knew a squadron from the ground up. The request for 'Ken' was 'returned approved,' and the only thing remaining to do was to request orders detaching him from Eastleigh to assume command of U.S.N.A.F. No. 2.

The position of Squadron Commander is one of great authority, being held in the R.A.F. by majors only. He has charge of 386 men, 42 officers, 10 Handley-Pages, and absolute say as to whether conditions are practicable for flying or not. The post, therefore, is one of authority and distinction, and has but one drawback — the Squadron Commanding Officer is not allowed to fly over the lines on the theory that 'any fool can do that,' and of being too valuable to lose. There is a great deal of irony in that, as I look at it now.

Before requesting orders for 'Ken,' it occurred to me that I

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ought to write him personally and get his consent to the plan, because I wanted him to come in whole-heartedly or not at all. On the next day I sent a letter to 'Ken' at Eastleigh, where he was acting as chief pilot and tester after his spell at the front, and put the whole thing up to him in all its gaudy trappings. By return dispatch bearer I received his first answer, which I will not attempt to quote verbatim, but will paraphrase as best I can. He didn't waste many words in getting to the point. He said that he was 'tickled stiff' at the proof of trust in him the Group Commander had shown, and that he would, of course, come over and do the best he could, but 'honest, Bob, it won't fit me.' He said that he appreciated the honor and all that sort of thing, and that removal from active flying duty looked pretty good when he thought of the end of the war. *But* — unless I asked it as a very special favor, he'd rather not take it — he wanted to fight, couldn't stand not being in it every minute, would curl up and blow away if they kept him behind the lines, and that a single-seater was his idea of a holiday and all he wanted, and 'for the love of Pete get me out of this hole and back to 213' (the R.A.F. Camel Squadron).

Well, I thought a lot about that letter and late at night I wrote a signal to the commanding officer at Eastleigh for 'Ken,' saying that the Skipper would give him a day squadron if he'd rather have it. I fairly crammed the squadron down his throat, when any other man in the whole service would have sold his last package of chocolate to win the job. I began to think he was crazy from overwork or English air or something wet and foggy as Eastleigh was. Then the answer came back and I saw the whole thing. This note was shorter than the other; only a few lines, but I'll never forget them. It began, 'Bob — There's no use trying to make a commanding officer out of me if I can't fight and fly all I want and when I want.' Then he repeated what he'd said. I'm not sure it wasn't put even better than before, but the end was the best. He said, 'Some people were born to paint, some to write, some to lead, and some to just plain go out and do-it-all-by-yourself,' and all he wanted was 'a good Camel, *beaucoup* ammunition, plenty of gas, and so forth,' (the latter I interpreted as meaning Huns) and finally to thank the Skipper, if I wanted to, for him and ask him for the love of Mike to get him back out of that hole, so he could have a chance to do the job he was made for.

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So that ended the search for a commanding officer, and we started looking around for some one to fill in until the pilots of experience could be spared. It was not until some weeks later that 'Ken' came over and took dinner with me, the day after his arrival from Eastleigh. He was the most elated person nervously I'd ever seen until 'Di' was reported missing; and I thanked my stars then I wasn't a Hun within ten miles of him in that mood. I believe he was the best we had in the line of a pilot, and I don't want a finer pal than a man who can give up everything for his ideal of service and honor.

This has taken up a lot more space than I would have judged, and is still incomplete in lots of ways; but I hope it will serve to give some idea of 'Ken's' outlook on things and his utter disregard of his own advancement in contrast to so many. And again, it may show you something that will give you a hint of one of the reasons we all loved him so — he was an honest-to-goodness man.

Yours

BOB LOVETT

On October 13th, Kenneth flew his last new machine over from Eastleigh to Dunkirk and spent the night with his friends of the Northern Bombing Group, overjoyed to be with them once more and eagerly anticipating active service in the great drive which was expected to force the German armies out of Flanders. 'Di' Gates had made his last flight nine days earlier than this and no definite word had been received concerning his fate, whether he was dead or a prisoner. Kenneth had added as a postscript to one of his letters from Eastleigh, on October 10th:

Did Dave tell you that 'Di' Gates, our old pal, the C.O. of Dunkirk, has 'gone west'? He was shot down over Roulers. I miss him terribly.

On the morning of the 14th, Kenneth went out on an early patrol with a flight from his beloved Squadron 213. In the late afternoon he joined another patrol from which he never returned. Just how he met his end and whither he had vanished was for a long time curtained in mystery.



## KENNETH MACLEISH'S PATH TO GLORY

It was merely known that he had made a very gallant finish against great odds and had shot down at least one enemy plane before his own was crippled and brought down. There were eight machines in the British patrol, led by Captain Green as flight commander. The weather was so cloudy that the fliers became separated into two groups and lost sight of each other. Three of them kept together in one formation, Captain Green, Lieutenant Allen, also an Englishman, and Lieutenant Kenneth MacLeish.

These observed two German planes flying fairly low and promptly attacked. MacLeish and Allen maneuvered adroitly and finished the affair without help. They got on the tails of the enemy and shot them down one after the other. The first was seen to go reeling down ablaze. The second dropped, either disabled or with a dead pilot in it. There is no reason to doubt that Kenneth bagged one of them and assisted in destroying the other.

It is conjectured that these two German planes were decoys. No sooner were they disposed of than eight more planes swooped out of the screening clouds overhead. The fight was brief, swift, and savage. Fairly smothered by numbers, MacLeish and Allen made their last stand. Flight Commander Green escaped to tell the news, but his facts were meager. His two companion pilots had been shot down. This was about all he could say. Nobody knew where they fell and whether they were alive or dead. They were missing. Lieutenant Allen's machine had been seen to go down in flames. Apparently there had not been even a final glimpse of MacLeish.

It may be said, in passing, that not a trace of the body of Lieutenant Allen or his machine was ever found. As M. Henri Lavedan wrote of Guynemer, 'Where has he gone? By what wings did he thus manage to glide into immortality? Nobody knows; nothing is known. He ascended and never came back, that is all.'



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

Of course there was the hopeful possibility that Kenneth might have survived to be taken prisoner and carried along with the Germans in their retreat. This was sustained by the fact that no tidings of him could be discovered among the Belgian people where he had fallen from the sky. The Red Cross took an active hand in the investigation and endeavored to find some clew at Berne as the clearing house for information concerning prisoners of war. This was fruitless.

The Armistice was signed. The American forces were quitting their various stations or getting ready to move homeward. The weeks passed by into the new year and still there came no hint or whisper of the fate of Kenneth MacLeish. In behalf of the Red Cross, Foster Rockwell was exploring every possible source of inquiry. It was late in January of 1919 before the mystery was solved, more than three months after the death of Kenneth. The body of the lost aviator and his wrecked machine had been discovered by a Belgian landed proprietor in one of his fields on the day after Christmas where they had lain for more than two months. That they were not found sooner was explained by the flooded condition of the region. This Belgian, M. Rouse, had written a letter to the English authorities and in this manner the news was conveyed to Squadron 213, R.A.F. A party of its officers, Captain MacKay, Captain Spelling (the Adjutant), Lieutenant Turner, and Captain Stevenson, went to the place, several miles from the Belgian town of Leffinghe, and identified the remains of Lieutenant Kenneth MacLeish and the fragments of the machine which he had flown.

For some inexplicable reason, the letter from the good-hearted M. Rouse, the first intelligence received, was not at once forwarded to Captain Hanrahan's headquarters of the Northern Bombing Squadron by a messenger but followed the slow procedure of official correspondence and

## KENNETH MACLEISH'S PATH TO GLORY

was a month on the way. It was the British method of handling documents. The circumstances are explained in detail by Captain Hanrahan in a letter to Bruce MacLeish, dated January 31st:

You have undoubtedly been informed by now of the fact that your brother's body was found and buried. On receipt of the information I immediately dispatched an officer to the place, had a photograph taken of his grave, and had inquiries made in regard to the finding of your brother's body.

The grave is very well located on this plot of land, and I have since been informed that the owner of the land had presented the plot on which the grave is situated to your mother, in case she desires to allow the body to remain in its present location.

As to its removal elsewhere, I have taken no steps in regard to that, for the very good reason that there are stringent regulations, both in Belgium and France, in regard to this matter. However, I would be unable to handle this except through the Force Commander in London, and not knowing your desires, I have taken no steps thus far.

One of your brother's former classmates, Lieutenant John C. Menzies, is installing to-day a small headstone, properly marked, which we obtained in Calais. I can assure you that everything that can possibly be done is being done, as we were all very fond of your brother. He was, without exception, the most popular man in our force and his loss was deeply felt by us all.

I had not given up all hope of his being a prisoner until lately, when every possible avenue of search had been opened with no result. The country in which your brother's body was found is extremely bad. It is covered far and wide with bush camouflage. Its vicinity had been inundated for a large period of time. The roads were impassable until very recently.

The body was buried in the vicinity of where it was found, which was near the village of Schoore, near a small farmhouse, just off the road between Schoore and Leke. I had been informed by the Commanding Officer of 213 Squadron that your brother was lost in the vicinity of Leffinghe, but this proved to be an error, the spot being about ten kilometers southwest of Leffinghe.

He was found fully dressed, with his gloves and helmet still on, and as far as we were able to learn from the man who found

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

him, there was no mark on his body to indicate that he had been shot. His helmet was strapped under his chin, and it would seem that he had fallen from his plane or had been thrown out.

The country at the time was of course in the hands of the enemy, and although he fell behind the enemy lines, he was probably not seen, due to the condition of the land in the vicinity. No trace whatsoever can be found of his plane, although we are still searching for it, but it is a common thing for the enemy in this part of the country to remove all traces of planes which have fallen back of their lines. He was in a very bad fight at the time, and it would appear that he was shot down and thrown out of his plane.

I have written to the man who found the body and buried it, thanking him for his kindness and expressing my deep appreciation of his services, and I regret as much as you do the long interval that has elapsed before we were informed of the finding of the body. But being familiar with the poor service in this part of the world, it is not surprising that the letter written by this person shortly after he and his friends found your brother did not arrive at my office until practically one month later. While I hesitate to place any blame for this on the English authorities to whom the letter was evidently sent, it appears that their red tape was responsible for the delay, as a motorcycle could have carried this message to me in a few hours, as they are all familiar with the location of my headquarters.

As soon as Lieutenant Menzies returns (he is now placing a stone on your brother's grave) I will have him write out all the details of the information he received from the Belgians and send them on to you. He is to go back to the United States very shortly and says he will make it a point to see you. We one and all want to express to your parents our deepest sympathies in the loss of our gallant comrade who was one of the finest pilots that ever flew over the north country, and he was thoroughly unhappy over his inactivity over a long period. Not having any day squadron, I made special use of your brother, because of his all-round ability, in other duties in this organization, but he kept after me, telling me that he hoped he would be given a chance to do further work over the lines. I was specially requested to send him with 213 Squadron, R.A.F., as he had been with them before. He was exceedingly happy at the idea of going back with 213 and getting a chance at the Hun. Misfortune overtook him too soon,



KEN MACLEISH'S GRAVE AT SCHOORE, BELGIUM





## KENNETH MACLEISH'S PATH TO GLORY

or he would have given an account of himself second to none in this sector, I am sure.

This is the report of a commanding officer, in words plain and unadorned but pervaded by sincere feeling. He tells how Kenneth was found, but it remained for the poetic art of Archibald MacLeish to beautify the episode and to fructify it with the spirit of martial sacrifice and tender devotion.

### A BELGIAN LETTER

Madame, it is my duty to make known  
The brave death of a soldier. I had gone  
Today, the Christmas morrow, to my farm  
Hard by the town of Bruges, to see what harm  
This wind of war had made among my walls  
And in my garden, where the blackbird calls  
First always in the spring. Madame, I went  
With two old friends, an architect of Ghent  
And one that had a factory of cloth  
At Bruges before the war, true Belgians both  
And truer friends to me: they'd not endure  
That I should go alone. 'You're never sure,'  
They said, 'what thing the Boche has left behind,'  
And so they came. The road was hard to find  
Even for me that sixty years or more  
Have trudged each market day from Bruges to  
Schoore,  
And all the farm was ruin, and a pool  
Of horrid water — not a cart or tool  
Nor any wall upstanding, save the stack  
That shivered in the wind and warned us back.  
In all that place there was no living thing  
Save that the sudden gusts made stir and ring  
Within the stark door frame the summons bell,  
And on the hearth the water dripped and fell.  
We went about the house to where the barn  
Had fallen inward and the earth was torn  
With shreds of iron; there beneath the stave  
Of broken wood we found — you must be brave,  
Madame — we found the body of a man,  
An officer, and on his breast the span  
Of golden eagle wings. There was a case

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

With papers and your name, and then the place,  
The other side of the world, whence he had come,  
And pictures that we thought must be his home.  
Madame, we made a casket out of boards  
And buried him — the merchant has the words  
In Flemish, of the service for the dead,  
For all his sons were killed, and these he said,  
And then we made a grave above the foss  
Within the garden wall, and set a cross  
Marked with his name, and when the spring comes  
North  
To heal the land with flowers, and the earth  
Is clean again of the war, it will be good  
To lie there by the wall, and feel the blood  
Of rose and currant stirring in the loam,  
And know that in the earth he has come home  
Whatever home he sought; and where, one time,  
Within his brain old questionings did climb,  
Now will th' unwondering roots of summer's rose  
Thrust, — and the beauty of the world unclose.

Meanwhile Trubee Davison had so far recovered his health that he was able to visit England and France. In the preface of this history Admiral Sims mentions him as 'limping into my office in London, badly crippled but determined to locate the last resting-place of one of his Unit who had been killed in France.' It was at Trubee's request that Foster Rockwell inserted the following advertisement in the leading newspapers of England and Scotland:

MISSING SINCE OCT. 14,

LIEUTENANT KENNETH MACLEISH

American Naval Flying Officer with 213th Aero Squadron, R.A.F. Forced down near Leffinghe, Belgium. Subsequently natives reported American Naval Officer taken prisoner in that vicinity. Will any one having information concerning the whereabouts or fate of Lieut. MacLeish, or information concerning the incident please communicate with ROCKWELL, AMERICAN RED CROSS, LONDON.

The advertisement was repeated daily during the first week of February. Foster Rockwell and Trubee Davison,

## KENNETH MACLEISH'S PATH TO GLORY

who was at Cannes, did not know that Captain Hanrahan had cabled several days earlier the news of the discovery of Kenneth's body. It was a coincidence that the advertisement should have caught the eye of Captain A. J. Spelling, Adjutant of Squadron 213, who had been one of the identification party to make the trip to Schoore. From Cranbrook Road, Ilford, Essex, he sent the following reply:

With reference to the paragraph in last Saturday's *Times*, asking for information about Lt. MacLeish, Captain A. J. Spelling of above address can furnish all particulars and will call on 'Rockwell' at a given address. Please acknowledge.

In this curious manner the threads of the story were twisting together after being lost for so long a time. Rockwell interviewed Captain Spelling immediately and obtained from him a few details other than those already given. These were embodied in a report sent to Trubee at Cannes. About all that has not been told was in this paragraph:

From the condition of the machine, which was very badly riddled with machine-gun bullets, 'Kenney' came out of control and smashed. He evidently was able to crawl from his plane, and his body was found some two hundred yards away in a very marshy country. It was impossible to ascertain whether or not he had been shot, and the supposition of Captain Stevenson, the surgeon of the R.A.F., is that he got out of his machine, was able to move a little way and then died, of wounds or exposure.

During the summer at Huntington, when the First Yale Unit and the Girls' Radio Class had been together, between Kenneth MacLeish and Miss Priscilla Murdock there had grown to be something more precious than friendship. Their engagement was formally announced on August 22, 1918, while Kenneth was on foreign service. It was Trubee's first thought, therefore, to forward the information received from Foster Rockwell. This he did in

## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

a cable message addressed to Mr. Harvey Murdock on February 12th:

Commanding officer 213 Aero Squadron R.A.F. advises 'Lieut. Kenneth MacLeish was shot down on the afternoon October 14th, 1918, the day preceding evacuation of Belgian coast. His body was found by a Belgian late in December and identified by officers of this squadron on December 27th. Owing to devastated condition of country very difficult to give accurate map reference of position of grave. Papers and money found on body forwarded by registered letter January 22nd to officer commanding U.S. Naval Headquarters.' Will locate grave and interview the Belgian and officers who identified body. Alice, Frances, Father, and Mother and myself cannot express to you how deeply we feel for Priscilla. Before leaving the States we marveled at her extraordinary force of character during her anxiety and we know that in this crisis she will be the same. We likewise appreciate that no amount of courage can take away the great sorrow which has come to her. We do not have to express to her our own feelings regarding 'Kenney' for she knows them well. She likewise knows that she is always in our thoughts and prayers. As we do not know address of Archie MacLeish or his family, please forward this cable to them sending our deepest sympathy. We feel for them as we do for Priscilla. It is futile to try to express one's feelings at this time, but at least you all who are suffering know that the Davison family is with you. If there is anything we can possibly do, cable Morgan, Harjes, Paris.

Fortunately Norman MacLeish, one of Kenneth's brothers was in France, still in the service, and as soon as possible he obtained a furlough. A letter from him to his sister describes this pilgrimage to the Belgian farm.

DEAREST ISHBEL:

I got back to Paris yesterday from a visit to Kenney's grave. By the merest breaking of good luck, I got there on Memorial Day and what decorating I was able to give the grave seemed exceptionally appropriate. I will also say that I believe I was able to give Kenney a better floral tribute than most A.E.F. graves got on that day. A fund was raised for the purpose of decorating American graves, to which I contributed in Kenney's

## KENNETH MACLEISH'S PATH TO GLORY

memory. But I know it was unlikely that they would find his grave, which is off by itself. However, luck was with us and I got there and was able myself to do more for his individual grave than a general fund could do for a large number of graves. I can't tell you how happy it made me feel to be there on May 30th.

I found a friend of mine in Brussels, an officer I had met at Tours. He accompanied me down to Bruges and when I secured the use of a Red Cross Ford he came along with me all the way. We called at the Chateau de la Waere, near Ghiselles, where M. Rouse lives, but he wasn't there. However, Madame, who is a very beautiful and charming lady, received me and loaned me a domestique to show us the way. We went down the road to what was once the village of Schoore. There we met M. Rouse, who is Conseilleur Provincial, and was there engaged, with some other elders of Flandre Occidental, in reconstruction work. He came along with us to the farm where Kenney rests, about one kilometer from Schoore.

There I saw the base of a headstone, and the stone leaning on it, rising out of the luxuriant grass. We got out of the car and went over to the grave. M. Rouse and Lieutenant Greathouse fell back silently. We two officers saluted and M. Rouse took off his hat. Then I laid the flowers on the grave. No one said anything, and the brisk summer breeze made waves in the long grass. The sun was shining, and the land of desolation looked as cheerful as possible. It was a very simple little ceremony, entirely impromptu and without any arrangements. We all acted instinctively, and I think for that reason it was rather beautiful. I was quite moved, as you can imagine, and during it all I couldn't help but feel that our dear gallant brother wasn't so awfully far away.

M. Rouse showed me where he found Kenney's body. I think you saw on the map I sent you. Well, the map wasn't quite accurate. The body was not lying on a pile of débris, but in the grass nearby — lying face upwards, the right arm extended horizontally, and the left arm thrown carelessly across the body. As you know, his gloves were still on, the coat buttoned, the helmet on, and everything in the pockets untouched. The plane was found about two hundred yards away. M. Rouse says he is sure Kenney was dead when his body hit the ground. The position in which it was found was that which a lifeless body



## THE FIRST YALE UNIT

would take in falling. Had he been conscious, he would have at least tried to remove his gloves and unbutton his coat and remove his helmet. There were no signs of that. Had he suffered, his body would have been drawn up. It wasn't. It was stretched out in a natural position. The cause of his death we will never know, but I feel certain of this — that he was killed in the machine and fell out of it when still high up.

I told M. Rouse what we wanted done to the grave and he assured me it would be done. He will have a cement base made for the stone and put a grille about the grave. The old farmer who lives on the farm is back already, living in the 'caves' and pottering about the débris, cleaning it up as fast as he can. He is very much interested in the grave — in fact, very fond of it, for it represents an outlet for his feelings of gratitude toward the United States. M. Rouse said that he (the farmer) had asked his permission to make a nice little Flemish garden over and around the spot, as soon as anything can be done down there. Of course we will have to wait a little, because hauling just now is difficult. The roads are still full of shell holes, and the Boche didn't leave many horses and carts behind them.

I tried to thank M. Rouse for his trouble and he stopped me, saying that this was the only thing he had been able to do for the United States and that it was a very real pleasure.

I have changed my mind entirely about Kenney's resting in Belgium. My four days in that gallant, lovable little country were enough to convince me. Everywhere I went I was received with the most extreme friendliness. I, as an American, was something to shower love and gratitude upon. One old Brugesois said to me, 'You of America have reached the summit of civilization. That is so because you are so noble and gallant and because you champion the cause of smaller nations. The rest of us must try to be like you. Belgium will never forget what you have done for her.'

M. Rouse, who owns six farms, all of which are destroyed, took off his cap and showed me his white-gray hairs. 'Before the war, in 1914, that was black,' he said. 'And you will never know the extent of the good you did us. You saved our lives. The Boches were trying to exterminate us by starvation, but you foiled them. When you sent us food they didn't dare withhold it, but they were very mad at you.'

Belgium, to the last person, is trying to express its love for us.

## KENNETH MACLEISH'S PATH TO GLORY

So I can't think of a better place for Kenney to rest — on the soil for which he gave his 'today,' and resting amidst those who will keep his memory alive with the intensest love you ever heard of. I can imagine for years to come mothers and grand-mothers bringing their little ones to the grave of 'L' Aviateur Américaine' who died that they again have life and happiness. These country folk lead simple lives and things like that stand out in strong contrast. At all events, Kenney won't be forgotten or lost there, and nowhere could he receive more loving care.

As it happened for Curtis Read, so the mortal tenement of Kenneth MacLeish was removed to an American military cemetery in accordance with the general policy of the Government at Washington. He sleeps among the patriot dead of his own flag and country in the ground called Flanders Field near Brussels.

On February 2, 1919, the Sunday following the receipt of the news at home that his body had been found, a simple memorial service was held in the church in Glencoe, the Illinois village where Kenneth had been known and loved all his life. Flowers lavishly offered spoke their own language. Young men who had been in training with Kenneth and had served with him abroad came to act as ushers. The assemblage sang the hymns that had been dear and familiar to Kenneth. The whole service was vibrant and uplifted with the spirit of the boy who had written home to his mother:

If I must make the supreme sacrifice I will do it gladly, and I will do it honorably and bravely as your son should. And the life that I lay down will be my preparation for the grander, finer life that I shall take up. *I shall live.* . . . You *must* not grieve! I shall be supremely happy — so must you — not that I have 'gone west,' but that I have bought such a wonderful life at such a small price and paid for it gladly.

At the service, the Reverend Charles W. Gilkey prefaced his talk by the reading of a poem written by Archibald MacLeish:

# THE FIRST YALE UNIT

TO K. MACL.

*(Brought down above Schoore, Belgium, October 14th, 1918)*

O Rosa Mundi, O unearthly rose,  
That perishes, that dies, that surely dies,  
That perishes and goes  
Into the dust again,  
Into the lifting trees, the blowing skies,  
The terrible dumb tides of rippled grass,  
Or drifting wide doth pass  
Down to the sea,  
And downward to the old forgetful sea;

O flesh that dies,  
Something there is of thee  
More than the red idea, the lingered breath,  
That bears no faith nor vassalage to death  
Nor suffers any change;  
Some imprint of the vanished form and fire,  
Form that the hands desire,  
Color the eyes adore,  
Color and shape,  
That lives, that lives, that does endure; not strange,  
Not utterly dissolved, not less nor more,  
Nor empty imaging, —  
Some coin of Beauty's buried gold to escape  
Earth and the groping rootage of the Spring.

O Death, not all, not all his beauty's strength,  
His dark crowned head,  
His body's shining length  
Of subtle gracefulness, is shattered, dead,  
Dead and forever lost.  
I see him lie, a naked swimmer tos't  
High on the Pallid sands,  
With all the tawny summer crowning him,  
His broad brown hands  
Cupped to the flooding sun; thigh, shoulder, throat,  
A perfect rhythm, a fierce suspended note  
Of life intensely living, gay, —  
I know again that day.

Ah, Pitiful! He had no splendid dream,  
No song, no vision's spark,  
To lead him, blind, with fitful tossing gleam

## KENNETH MACLEISH'S PATH TO GLORY

Beyond your hour of dark;  
He had no dream  
Who was himself a music and a flame,  
Who sought not glory, but himself became  
The glory of his victories,  
Who died  
Clean washed in anger and the fighter's pride,  
Unearthed of ease,  
And down those burning skies  
Fell like a shattered star.

O Rosa Mundi — in the rose that dies  
Something there is, not mystical and fear,  
But dear, familiar, sure,  
As in a dream the hazy voices are,  
Something that lives, that lives, that lives, that does endure.

On December 14, 1919, the following telegram from the Secretary of the Navy was received by Mrs. Andrew MacLeish:

Have assigned name MacLeish to Destroyer No. 220 now building at Philadelphia, in honor of your son, Lieutenant K. MacLeish, U.S.N.R.F. Will you act as sponsor or designate sponsor for this vessel? Launching will take place at Philadelphia, Dec. 18.

In accordance with this invitation, Kenneth's sister Ishbel, a senior at Vassar College, went to Philadelphia and in her brother's name christened the new destroyer. A few days previously the word had come that Kenneth had been posthumously awarded the Navy Cross 'for distinguished service and extraordinary heroism.'

His own church in Glencoe was then planning to erect a spacious and beautiful Community House for its religious and social activities. It was decided to make the central feature of this building a noble assembly room which should be known as Kenneth MacLeish Hall. In it is a speaking likeness of him done in bronze, underneath which is preserved the wooden cross that marked and sanctified his first burial place in Belgium.





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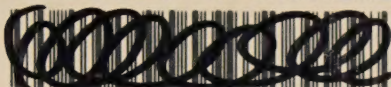
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